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Playground 81 was a recreational program available to children in the Mission Hill Extension Housing Development in Roxbury, Massachusetts. It was operated by 10 mothers, both black and white, indigenous to the project. It was supported by funds allotted by the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Research and Development Center at Harvard University for a two-year period from September, 1965 to June, 1967 for the purpose of developing innovative schools which would challenge traditional education. Initially the Harvard team had planned to utilize teenagers who had dropped out of high school to run the program. However, it turned out that mothers took over the program, since the teenagers interest was short-lived. The Harvard Team wanted to leave decision making up to the community mothers in a democratic fashion; however, this became inimical and detrimental to the program, since chaos and lack of organization resulted. An evaluation of the program showed that participants and community people felt that there should be more organization and structure and a clearer delineation of roles if it were to be effective. Playroom 81 did increase the achievement expectations of group members and help them become more self-reliant. (Author/KJ)

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# DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION
# of the
# PLAYROOM 81 PROJECT

Roxbury, Massachusetts

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Joan A. MacVicar, Ph.D.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER I
Introduction 1.

CHAPTER II
Prospectus for Playroom 81 2.
- A. Overview 2.
- B. Philosophic Values Underlying the Study 3.
- C. Rationale 4.
- D. Objectives of Playroom 81 6.
- E. Probable Effects of Playroom 81 Upon the Community 7.
- F. Probable Value to the University 7.
- G. Probable Effects on the Local School System 8.
- H. Proposed Program Endeavors 9.
- I. Evolution of Objectives for Playroom 81 10.

CHAPTER III
Description of Playroom 81 12.
- A. Geographic Location of Playroom 81 12.
- B. Demographic Description of Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Communities 12.
- C. Characteristics of Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Communities 13.
- D. Program Facilities in Mission Hill Communities 15.
- E. Physical Facilities of Playroom 81 18.
- F. Formal Program Structure 19.

CHAPTER IV
History of Playroom 81 25.

CHAPTER V
Method of Evaluation 55.
- A. Interview Outlines 56.
- B. Impressions of Playroom 81 58.
- C. Indigenous Staff's Impressions of Their Own Group Functioning 63.

CHAPTER VI
Strengths and Weaknesses of the Playroom 81 Program 92.

CHAPTER VII
Overall Assessment of the Playroom 81 Program 102.
- A. Training 103.
- B. Team Approach 108.
- C. Selection of Non-professionals 109.
- D. Delegation and Use of Authority 112.

CHAPTER VIII
Summary 120.

# APPENDICES

| Appendix | |
|---|---|
| A | Grant Request for Continuing Demonstration of the Community Program for Children and Mothers |
| B | Copy of newspaper article, "Ted Makes Anti-poverty Tour, Says Playroom Deserves Aid" |

# TABLES

Tables Page

1. Demographic Information on Indigenous Staff Members 24.

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

Playroom 81 is a recreational program available to children in the Mission Hill Extension Housing Development, Roxbury, Massachusetts. It is operated by ten mothers indigenous to the project who are subsidized by the Commonwealth Service Corps.

Playroom 81 was initiated in the fall of 1965 by Drs. Robert Belenky and Jonathan Clark working out of the Research and Development Center, Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. Funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity were allotted to the Shadow Faculty at the Research and Development Center and in turn to PEAR (Psycho-Educational Action Research) over a two-year period (September 1965 - June 1967) for the purpose of developing "innovative and Utopian laboratory schools" that would challenge traditional methods of education.

Playroom 81 began as an attempt to develop new guidance models which could meet better the needs of economically disadvantaged urban areas. During the two years of operation, its program has evolved out of the community's interest and most intensely felt need for new services.

# CHAPTER II

## Prospectus for Playroom 81[1]

### A. Overview

Over the two-year period of operation under the auspices of the Research and Development Center, the overall goals and rationale of Playroom 81 remained constant while their implementation evolved with the development of the program.

Initially, Playroom 81 was intended to serve as a pilot demonstration for a new urban guidance community model designed to improve communications and relationships between public school systems and economically disadvantaged communities which had become alienated from one another. Drs. Belenky and Clark felt that the guidance counselor, traditionally confined to work within the public school system, could become more effective if his role included the development of social action community programs utilizing interested teenagers. It was anticipated that the community-school milieu might then become more positive, conditions for learning more favorable, and the incidence of teenage dropouts and poor academic performance could be reduced.

The major goal of Playroom 81 remained that of providing an opportunity for community members to learn skills that would enable them to become more productive in a highly competitive society. However, teenagers were replaced as the focal group by community mothers. and Playroom 81 become a much needed recreation program for neighborhood children.

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[1] Prospectus was developed by Robert Belenky, Ph.D.

## B. Philosophic Values Underlying the Study

The following were presented in a proposal to the Shadow Faculty as the personal values of Dr. Robert Belenky, initiator of the Playroom 81 program:

1. Autonomy and Self-determination

   It is good for individuals within a given community to function as much as possible according to their own needs, goals, and convictions, assuming a respect for the needs, goals, and convictions of others. While collaboration and a degree of interdependence are desirable, excessive dependence which causes one's own resources to whither in disuse are undesirable.

2. The Educator (including the Guidance Counselor) as the Presenter of Options.

   Rather than teach a pattern of behavior--verbal or otherwise, it is the proper function of the educator to present realistic options that may be chosen among, and to guide the decision-making process to insure rationality in consonance with the needs, goals, and convictions of the choice-maker. However, the educator may need to teach that choice is indeed possible and that it is to be preferred over acceptance of dogma--although the latter too, represents a chosen position.

3. A Pro-learning Climate

   A social climate supportive of curiosity, exploration, goal setting and problem solving--in a word: learning is good.

4. Interpersonal Support

   A social climate which fosters collaboration, respect for the individual and interpersonal facilitation is desirable. It is infinitely better than a climate which fosters hostility, disrespect, and "success" assumed to be obtainable only at the expense of others.

## C. Rationale

The rationale for Playroom 81 is composed of two basic assumptions.

### 1. Alienation

Economically deprived communities and their public schools are alienated from one another because the needs of the people in these urban communities have not been met. The school comes to be seen by the community as a hopeful but remote and possibly malignant institution while the local residents are perceived by the school as threatening, welcome only when invited, and then characteristically when a crisis has occured. A subcultural set of antagonism to formal learning develops--hence early dropouts, marginal literacy, and delinquent behavior.

The teacher, reacting to a frustrating situation, may stereotype students and withdraw by isolating himself or displaying aggression toward the students. The school-community gap increases and ample justification is provided for the prevalence of antischool attitudes. If the school is to be effective in an area where the school and community are mutually alienated, some form of coming together must occur before a climate supportive of effective teaching and learning can exist.

## 2. The Guidance Counselor

Current models for guidance, where the guidance counselor's role is confined to the school system, are not adequate to achieve the goals that improve community-school relationships. The guidance counselor is hired to increase the probability of a given child learning and behaving appropriately within the school system. It has also been proposed that the guidance counselor act as a facilitator of decision making. Intelligent choices imply awareness of the options, goals, strategies and risks involved in that choice and that one has the power to act on the decision once it is made (Belenky, R., 1966).

The guidance counselor usually works through a medium of verbal exchange although there is little evidence to suggest that psychotherapy is successful (Eysenck, H., 1961). Even in the best staffed school systems, there is insufficient time for short-term therapeutic counseling or decision-making help.

A new model is required which can place the counselor in a position to reconcile school and community by changing situations, behavior, and attitudes so that a good teaching and learning climate can occur. He would be seen as an instigator of pro-learning community action rather than simply a counselor or a teacher, a man helping communities organize para-school activities intended to increase commitment to learning (not necessarily school based) within local areas and to provide a force with which to change existing educational institutions to become at once more relevant and effective.

## D. Objectives of Playroom 81

Playroom 81 as a demonstration project had five purposes.

1. To test and develop the model for urban guidance.
2. Drawing upon social science theory, to develop techniques for facilitating individual and community change.
3. To develop an action laboratory for the study of the effects of participation in a community activity on self-concept and behavior, both cognitive and interpersonal.
4. To generate testable hypotheses relevant to the individual, the school, and the community.
5. To provide a natural laboratory setting in which hypotheses relevant to the individual, the school, and the community may be tested.

## E. Probable Effects of Playroom 81 Upon the Community

1. Increased community morale even of those who were not direct participants. Feelings of optimism about the probability of effort leading to success should lead to considerable activity on behalf of the mothers group.

2. Increased participation in the process of education and hence provision of access to information and skills previously difficult to obtain; an increase in the general level of learning.

3. Provision of a social vehicle for "re-entry" of previously rejected community members (e.g. delinquents, isolates, etc.). By providing new roles, role contexts and expectations as well as a supportive high morale setting, a wide variety of individuals could find that they were not merely "accepted" but have a valuable contribution to make and thus are needed. It is felt that such a setting will have a far more powerful socializing effect than the traditional guidance counselor, no matter how skilled.

## F. Probable Value to the University

1. Provision of a setting for the generation and refining of hypothesis pertinent to the development of community-based urban educational programs.

2. Establishment of an informal center for training of graduate students in such areas as urban teaching, guidance, and community work.

3. Provision of an informal center for the collaboration of academic disciplines on problems of inner city education.

## G. Probable Effects on the Local School System

As the community participates more and more in education and hence becomes more confident and articulate, it is anticipated that increasingly sophisticated and effective demands for improvement will be made upon the existing schools. At the same time, a climate and setting will be provided so that new and better programs can be instituted more easily. This would seem to be particularly true of ancillary services such as tutoring, "indigenous non-professional" counseling and after-school study halls. Finally, a corps of trained local people will gradually come into being, able to help the school in such semi-professional roles as librarian, proctor, teacher aid, and secretarial aid. Eventually, some of these people will become fully credentialed teachers. In summary, it is anticipated that the local schools will become better articulated with the community at the same time that members of the community work both within the school and outside of it to improve its functioning.

## H. Proposed Program Endeavors

### 1. Training teenagers to work with other people.

The problem of the absent father is a very great one in the Negro working class areas. We suspect that if a "helping" ethos could be stimulated the long-term effects would be very positive. Thus, we have considered developing groups of young children conducted by teenagers under supervision. These groups would be recreational but focus would be placed on the evolving relationship between the people involved.

### 2. Parent groups.

During the day when the children are at school or in the late evening, it might be possible to meet with parents in order to pursue such topics as "How to help your child with his homework" or "Job opportunities" or "How to improve schools" or "What is the matter with schools?"

### 3. Jobs for teenagers.

As a first step in doing something about job training and placement, we would want to learn from the teenagers themselves about their needs and interests, collect job data, develop and/or discover training resources, and talk about effective interview and on-the-job behavior.

### 4. Raise aspiration levels.

Involve the community in the development of the instrumentalities required to realize them. By exposing our teenagers to many role models, occupational possibilities and making school more immediate and important through our discussion, we would expect that a general moving away from apathy would develop. Instrumentalities would have to be created both to change the individual and the people at the institutions which impinge upon him. Thus, methods of personal and social change will be considered in our discussions, and we will attempt to involve as many people as possible--particularly teenagers in the practice of both.

## I. Evolution of Objectives for Playroom 81

As work began with the mothers, the ambition of bringing about a general change in relations between the school and the community through the evolution of a new role for the guidance counselor was discarded. Attention was turned to Playroom 81 as an emerging institution where members of the community could learn of the various forms education could take, put them into practice in work and play programs with the children. It was hoped that Playroom 81 might eventually become a forum in which community people would discuss the changes they would most like to see enacted in the schools and the forms of community expression and organization they would adopt to try to bring about these changes.

A set of specific objectives geared to the newly-established organization as well as the individual aspirations and abilities of the mothers were outlined. These objectives might be summarized in the following way: (a) to establish Playroom 81 as an institution with the organization and power necessary to make its own decisions and establish a reasonably high standard of attendence, commitment and work from its members; (b) To provide the mothers with initial training in the care and management of children, developing skills which could be used in work with the children in the Playroom, or in the care of one's own children at home; (c) To increase contact with local institutions, both in the service of purposes a. and b. Also, to explore ways in which Playroom 81 might work in conjunction with the local public schools, possibly by providing services such as study halls or placement at the Playroom and observation of children who are experiencing difficulty in the classroom and (d) To provide services for the community by holding classes for children, providing parents who volunteer to help with supervision and support from the mothers who have been with the program for a year, and by being a center of work and discussion in which new ideas for community initiative and organization might germinate.

# CHAPTER III

## Description of Playroom 81

### A. Geographic Location of Playroom 81

Playroom 81 occupied the basement area of 81 Prentiss Street, Mission Hill Extension Housing Development, Roxbury, Massachusetts. Although technically on Prentiss Street, the Playroom partially borders Parker Street, the dividing line between Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Housing Development. (see map page

Both housing projects were erected and are leased by the Boston Redevelopment Authority to low-income families. Rents are established proportional to an individual's income and most families remain in the projects because the payment of higher rents would create considerable economic hardship for them.

### B. Demographic Description of Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Communities*

The Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Housing Developments are located in the Parker Hill-Fenway GNRP area (see map). These housing developments encompass two different population groups in which there is little cohesiveness or socially acceptable interaction, accompanied by long-standing racial tension. Mission Hill is primarily Irish Catholic and Mission Hill Extension is presently primarily Negro.

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*Information taken from APAC's (Area Planning Action Council) Proposal for funding in 1966-1967.

### 1. Mission Hill Housing Development

This development consists of one thousand twenty-three (1,023) dwelling units. Approximately 30% of the resident families receive public assistance. A number of incomplete or broken homes with a female household head is exceedingly high. Ninety percent of the residents are white. Gradual integration is taking place as reflected by the increase in the percentage of non-white families, from 5% in 1965 to 10% in 1967.

### 2. Mission Hill Extension Housing Development

This development is composed of 588 dwelling units. The percentage of families receiving public assistance is 70%. The population is largely Negro, with a very small percentage (approximately 3%) of Puerto Rican and white families.

## C. Characteristics of Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Communities

Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Housing Developments are essentially isolated communities although they are surrounded by universities, medical complexes, and centers of culture such as the Museum of Fine Arts. Institutions in the Parker Hill-Fenway area are expanding and developing with several effects upon the residence of these areas.

1. There is almost a total lack of land or space available for development of residential or community facilities (e.g. day care centers) on any long-range basis.

2. Distrust, suspicion and hostility had developed towards "outsiders," "agencies," and "University people" as disruptors of their way of life.

3. An attitude of cynicism is prevalent because of the contrast between new government subsidized buildings--libraries, gymnasiums, and dormitories and the adjacent bleak housing complexes with few recreational facilities.

In the housing projects there is little genuine sense of community. One reason is that the factor common to the residents is a low-income level. Certain groups tend to [illegible]; female heads of households on Aid for Dependent Children, intact families with children but without adequate income, and elderly families or individuals on limited income.

Lacking a sense of community pride and recreational facilities for youth, the housing projects contribute to vandalism, apathy, and despair in its inhabitants. Such is the climate that dominates much of the Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Housing Projects. In this environment, the children learn their values and aspirations and the patterns for achieving them.

## D. Program Facilities in Mission Hill Communities

Program facilities within both housing developments are limited, although they are more adequate in the Mission Hill Development than in the Extension. St. Alphonses Hall is partially responsible for this since it contains a gymnasium, auditorium, six bowling alleys, pool and ping-pong tables, a juke box and many rooms. Three basement areas are also available in Mission Hill for program activities in contrast to one in Mission Hill Extension.

APAC (Area Planning Action Council) programs, YMCA recruitment, St. Alphonses Hall, Boy and Girl Scout Troops comprise most of the organized activities in the Developments. The programs of each group are briefly outlined below.

### 1. APAC Programs

APAC was incorporated under by-laws approved by ABCD in August 1966 (see appendix for description of APAC) for the purpose of helping community members become economically and occupationally independent as well as involving more passive and reluctant residents in the on-going community programs. It was probably the most active organization in the Mission Hill area. The major program components for the period June 1, 1966 through March 31, 1967 were as follows:

#### a. Youth Outreach

The goal of this component was to involve youths in new and pre-existing basketball leagues, Boy Scout programs, and other activities such as regular dances. Two youth activity centers were opened to provide teenagers with a range of social, cultural, and educational activities for hard-to-reach youths as an alternative to gangism, vandalism, and drinking, a common pattern and major concern of the community.

### b. Summer Program of 1966

In the summer of 1966, APAC ran a full summer program for 380 children which included (a) eight weeks at a day camp in Stowe, Massachusetts; (b) fifty-nine bus trips to historical and cultural centers with stops for swimming whenever possible; (c) remedial reading and an arts and crafts program, staffed by volunteers and seminarians.

### c. Adult Education

Working in cooperation with Community Information Center at St. John's Church, the APAC publicized and referred adults to: State Department of Adult Education High School Diploma Courses; Northeastern University Program Instruction courses for High School Equivalency leading to matriculation; and Northeastern Reading Clinic and Whittier Street Tutoring Program.

### d. Vocational Counseling

APAC recruited, screened, interviewed, and placed 70 fourteen to fifteen year olds for the summer work experience program.

### e. Outreach and Referrals for Tutoring

Programs where referrals were made included Whittier Street tutorial program (for in-home children and adult supplement and enrichment tutoring), Northeastern University Reading Clinic, YMCA territorial program for remediation.

### f. Non-funded Program Components

Volunteer workers have operated programs in two non-funded areas.

#### 1. Consumer Action Program

A consumer action group formed from APAC-sponsored Consumer Education classes has organized egg buying clubs through which approximately 400 families receive eggs weekly at a considerable saving. Automotive and furniture buying clubs were also begun, bi-monthly trips were made to urban shopping centers where food costs were lower.

#### 2. Elderly Program

The elderly program was instituted through the formation of an area counsel for the elderly, a technical advisory committee of APAC which receives and coordinates information of programs and activities for the elderly in the area.

### 2. YMCA Recruitment

Two detached workers in the area (Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension) recruited about 50 boys to take part in YMCA activities. Payment of a membership fee of $10 was extended over a period of time.

### 3. St. Alphonses Hall

Although the Hall can accommodate 300 persons, 35-50 children and teenagers regularly use these facilities. The majority of the children are white although a restricted number of Negroes are allowed.

### 4. Boy and Girl Scout Troops

Eight troops operate in the housing developments. Of these, five are white, two are Negro, and one is mixed.

a. A pre-school day care program for children of working mothers.

### b. Young Sophisticates

A group of Negro girls meet socially twice monthly at 81 Prentiss Street.

## E. Physical Facilities of Playroom 81

Playroom 81, located in the basement of 81 Prentiss Street, Mission Hill Extension Housing Development, consists of an area approximately 35 by 120 feet partitioned into three rooms--two 20 by 15 feet and a large, more-frequently usedarea 20 by 50 feet. Within the 20 by 15 room there is a small area partitioned for office space. The largest room is used for all meetings and most of the program activities for the children. Four room dividers create distinct areas for each age group participating in a program activity. It is also furnished with stove, refrigerator, conference table, children's tables and chairs, toys, games, a reading corner where books are shelved for the children.

Initially drab and uninteresting, the mothers have been responsible for getting the floor tiled and walls painted in bright colors decorated with nursery rhyme figures.

## F. Formal Program Structure

### 1. Professional Staff

In the first year of operation, Robert Belenky, Ph.D. held the roles of Director and Researcher of the Playroom 81 project. He began with one assistant, Jonathan Clark*, a Harvard Graduate Student in Counseling psychology as educational and counseling supervisor. Several months later Jim Reed was hired to assist in program planning and establishment of rapport between the Mission Hill community and the Playroom 81 project.

In the second year of operation, Dr. Belenky's time commitment was reduced and Jonathan Clark's increased to the point where he has in fact become Director of the program and Dr. Belenky has assumed a role close to that of consultant. Jim Reed left the project in June of 1966 to take another position. A part-time Research and Evaluation Coordinator was hired in July of 1966 and a Research Assistant in February 1967.

*J. Clark has since received his Ed.D. in counseling psychology.

### 2. Indigenous Non-professional Staff

The indigenous staff of Playroom 81 includes ten mothers living in the Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Housing Developments who are paid by the Commonwealth Service Corps at the rate of $80 per month for 100 hours of service.

The number of mothers employed at one time has varied from six to ten with an average number of eight. As of May 1967, ten were employed, seven of whom were Negro and three of whom were white. They ranged in age from 25 to 40 years and had from two to eight children. Three had completed the tenth grade, one the eleventh, and six the twelth grade. Half of the mothers had intact households, that is, their husbands were living with the family, six received income assistance while four did not. Members of the indigenous staff had lived in the project for as little as one year and as long as 13½ years. The average residence time was eight years.*

### 3. Program Activities

Playroom 81 had a two-part program divided into morning and afternoon activities.

The morning activity. 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, included classes for the mothers, weekly or bi-weekly business meetings and guest speakers. During this same time a

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*Detailed demographic information is presented in Table I.

## TABLE I

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON INDIGENOUS STAFF MEMBERS

| Staff Member | Age | Educational Level | Number of Children | Length of Time in BHA Project* | Intact Household | Income Assistance | Race |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 31 | 12 | 4 | 9 | yes | no | Negro |
| B | 29 | 11 | 3 | 7 | no | yes | White |
| C | 29 | 10 | 5 | 1 | no | yes | White |
| D | 25 | 10 | 2 | 1.5 | no | yes | Negro |
| E | 25 | 12 | 3 | 12 | yes | no | Negro |
| F | 30 | 12+ | 3 | 9 | yes | no | White |
| G | 36 | 12 | 8 | 13.5 | no | yes | Negro |
| H | 40 | 10 | 6 | 9 | no | yes | Negro |
| I | 25 | 12 | 3 | 7 | yes | yes | Negro |
| J | 38 | 12 | 6 | 8 | yes | no | Negro |
| Average | 28 | 11 | 4 | 8 | | | |

*BHA - Boston Housing Authority

play group for the mothers' pre-school children was conducted by two Wheelock College students.

Afternoon activities, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. included a 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. planning hour for the after-school recreational activities from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

a. Morning Activities

1. Indigenous staff program: The weekly schedule of morning activities for the mothers of Playroom 81 was as follows:

Monday - closed in preference to Tuesday evening art class from February 1967 to May 1967. In June the Monday morning program was continued.

Tuesday - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon knitting class

Wednesday - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon sewing class

Thursday - 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. psychology class
11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon child observation class

Friday - 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. guest speaker
11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon business meeting

This schedule varied over the year and with the passage of time became increasingly structured.

The Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday morning classes were open to everyone in the two-project community. Two of the mothers conducted the knitting and sewing classes and Dr. Belenky and Jonathan Clark taught the Child Psychology and observation classes. The Tuesday evening class, run by a local teacher and professional artist, illustrated the techniques of weaving, batiking (an Indian process of designing with plaques on various kinds of fabric) and the art and process of making bead necklaces.

The mothers took turns each morning working with the Wheelock students in caring for the pre-school age children. This was designed to allow other mothers more freedom to participate in morning classes and meetings without interruption by their children.

The mothers occassionally took field trips to places of educational interest and participated in weekend or day outings designed simply for their and the children's enjoyment.

2. Pre-school playgroup: The mothers' pre-school children, supervised and taught each morning by two Wheelock students and one mother, finger-painted, played games, worked puzzles, colored, etc. Although limited space prohibits a larger program, the mothers would like to include more community children eventually.

### b. Afternoon Recreation Program

Approximately 30 children attended the afternoon program and were divided into groups on the basis of age and interest. Although the method of group selection varied, it was found that the most effective procedure was to have the children sign up for the group that interested them most. The following activities were offered:

1. Cooking class: Girls were taught simple housekeeping skills--planning, preparing, cooking, serving meals and cleaning up when they were finished.

2. Craft class: Basket making, gimp work, plaster molds, sand casting, and other artistic endeavors.

3. Sewing class which included a course in basic sewing skills. The girls were introduced to reading patterns, cutting out and sewing garments. They made A-line dresses and pant suits.

4. Games class: Primarily for boys and included pool, table hockey, wood burning, etc.

5. A library corner was available to anyone who wanted to use it. Educational films were also borrowed and shown in the library.

# CHAPTER IV

## History of Playroom 81

The program that has become known as Playroom 81 was initiated by Robert Belenky and Jonathan Clark working out of the Research and Development Center at Harvard University to develop "innovative" and "radical" educational programs. In the planning stages dropout and underachieving teenagers were to be rehabilitated through involvement in care giving activities. If, through these activities, they altered the community which had generated many of their problems, it was assumed these problems would be attenuated. This was to be social action therapy in contrast to traditional and frequently ineffective verbal psychotherapy.

The idea of therapeutic change through involvement in social action had partial roots in the 1965 summer Harvard-Boston program. This program had been designed to expand teachers' experiences by having them assume a variety of roles--teacher, planner, observer--in the classroom. Approximately 300 children, 50-60 teachers, and 20 guidance counselors, each with several teenage aids from the Youth Service Corps, were served. It was noted that some of the teenage aids, left to their own resources, worked well with children by involving them in folk school activities. If these teenagers, tentative dropouts themselves, worked effectively when allowed such responsibility, it was entirely possible that a more permanent change of role from student to teacher might challenge them and increase their own sense of worth and productiveness. This positive note should then generalize to motivate better academic performance and achievement.

This emerging concept coupled with the opportunity to develop innovative programs provided by PEAR motivated R. Belenky and J. Clark to look for an area in the Boston community that would be receptive to and benefit from such a program. After researching potential locations, they chose the Mission Hill and Mission Hill Extension Housing Developments for two main reasons: 1) The neighborhood had inadequate recreational facilities and programs, coupled with racial tension, apathy, and despair. 2) It had numerous potential resources, surrounded by universities, hospitals, mental health and cultural facilities.

As the Harvard team thought more about their new venture, only one thing was completely clear. They wanted to work with "an unlikely breed of teenager, kids who had obvious hangups... who were dropouts, had been through the juvenile prison system and mental hospitals... who had not had a decent home and community life, who had been humiliated, beaten, and generally mistreated.....Their goal was to train them to be different (if they wished) from whatever it was experience had taught them they must be". (Belenky, R., 1966, pp. 6,7)

Little was known about the community; what it needed, wanted, liked or how it lived and thought and felt. (Being well-educated middle-class participants in suburban and university living, the Harvard team did not know intimately what life in a lower socioeconomic ghetto was like. Perhaps their dreams were similar to those of ghetto inhabitants, but their obstacles, frustrations, and general expectations of life were not.) This fact was dominant in those first few months filled with discussions, questions, uncertainty and the hiring of Jim Reed, a Negro man with previous experience in delinquent youth work, whom they hoped would bring a greater awareness of project living which could contribute to program planning and community rapport.

Armed only with ideas and good intentions, the Harvard team began to actively explore the Mission Hill neighborhood. They rode bicycles, tossed basketballs, kicked footballs, talked over clothes lines and knocked on doors to become acquainted with the community and its expressed program needs. While they were putting out feelers and formulating plans, two things demanded immediate attention: a place to locate and some formal expression of the community's interests.

The first was initially taken care of when they were given space in St. Alphonses Hall, a Catholic Church building in Mission Hill Housing Development, that contained a gymnasium, an auditorium, bowling alleys, pool tables, juke box and many rooms. The hall was ideal and the most readily available space in the two housing developments. However, it soon became apparent that the Negro community was not accustomed to crossing the racial dividing line into white territory and any integrated program would not survive. Arrangements were then made to secure a location site in the basement headquarters of the Mission Hill Civic Association at 81 Prentiss Street. Although drab, it was the only indoor recreation space in the Negro project.

Hours of discussions continued about racial sensitivities, male and female roles in a community of female-dominated households, occupational frustrations, etc., but little of practical value emerged.

In November definitive steps were taken. The Harvard team breifly informed the group of their prospective program, and announced a meeting for the following day. Ten out of the 70 invited families appeared to hear them describe their interest in developing an educational program for children in which Harvard staff and training opportunities were available to community participants for one year until the program could continue independently. Residents were responsive and the general consensus of the greatest community need was a pre-school program.

This decision did not fit with Harvard's interest in rehabilitating delinquents, but they felt that the two might be combined if the teenagers, assisted by the mothers, could run a recreational program. It was decided to try this plan and two groups, instead of one, now demanded time and attention.

While original plans had focused upon teenagers, mothers were encouraged to form and organize their own group. Emphasis was put upon them acting as innovators rather than relying on the Harvard team. Whatever program emerged would be the result of their own efforts--it was the product of their hands.

Four full-time teenagers who had dropped out of school and six part-time aids who were still attending school were subsidized by the Youth Service Corps at the rate of $1.25 an hour. Five mothers volunteered and children began coming down to the Playroom. The total program was unstructured, roles were undefined and it was not clear whether the mothers were helping the teenagers or vice versa. Both groups required supervision and training in running a recreation program for children, but neither group received what they needed.

Much of the Harvard team's energy was spent in disagreements among themselves about the way things should be set up with the result that program supervision and planning suffered. Antagonisms were also bristling between the mothers and the teenagers on two accounts: with familiarity the teenagers became increasingly resentful of any work they were asked to do by the mothers. At the same time, they were paid while the mothers were not.

It was December and the program, barely begun, was already lagging. With Christmas approaching, the mothers decided to close the Playroom so they would have time to prepare for the holiday, and work to earn money for Christmas. Although the Harvard team did not favor this choice, their hands were tied because they themselves had given the mothers the right to make their own decisions.

This left the teenagers on their own, but their talk of redecorating the Playroom indicated their continuing interest. However, the enthusiasm quickly waned for during the Christmas week they spent the days sitting around reading and talking while children outside asked if they could come in. They even expressed resentment that they should have to bother with the children at all since this interferred with their reading and record playing. The Harvard team could not decide whether to give the teenagers time off, to pay them if they did not work, or exactly how they should occupy their time. Finally plans were made to take a trip to a lodge in New Hampshire where they would spend time planning for the next month.

After the first of the year, morale was low and momentum was lost. A few mothers returned but resented the fact that they had to do all the work. The teenagers were not assuming their share of responsibility and soon even these few mothers dropped out. The teenagers then rallied, determined to run the program themselves. It lasted for about two weeks, but because their efforts were motivated primarily by hostility towards the mothers, this burst of enthusiasm was not sustained.

Attendance was sporadic. It may have been too much to expect the mothers to volunteer long periods of time each day. Consequently, Commonwealth Service Corps was approached and in January the promise of an $80 "volunteer" stipend per month for 100 hours of service was promised for ten mothers. It was also arranged that receipt of this amount would not result in reduction of monthly payments for those receiving financial assistance.

At this point introduction of a more structured program was planned for the five mothers and five teenager aids involved. Classes in psychology, education, were to be held on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday mornings by the Harvard team. Wednesdays were to be trip days for parents--excursions to schools and other available facilities for children in the area. Movies from Boston Public Libraries were shown on Fridays, adult educational films in the morning and children's pictures in the afternoon.

This plan did not get off the ground because many of the mothers did not appear and the teenagers were left to do whatever was done. They got little supervision either from the mothers or the Harvard team. An interview with one of the teenagers suggested that even when they were functioning programatically they were uncertain of what they should be doing or whether it had any positive effect. One of the aids said, "As far as the kids are concerned, I kind of entertain them in one way or another--I don't know, sometimes I wonder what I am doing." Another teenage aid remarked, "--yesterday was good. I was entertaining the boys and girls with my guitar---something different instead of coloring all day long every day." In response to what he did with the children, another aid answered, "Mostly I'll help them color--it keeps them occupied for the time being till we find something better for them to do."

In addition to their concern about what they were doing and how they should do it, friction erupted from time to time among the aids themselves. Some found it difficult to participate in the functioning of their own group. They wanted to be alone, dislike the discussions or even teaching situations as well as work with the children.

On January 18, 1966 funding from the Commonwealth Service Corps finally came through and ten mothers were hired. The ten mothers and ten teenage aids were divided into five teams of four, each with two mothers and two aids. Each day one team would spend the entire time with the pre-school children of the mothers who worked on the program. This arrangement sounded good but did not work particularly well because there was growing friction between the mothers and the teenagers. When the teenagers shirked their duties, the mothers noted it publicly; when the mothers were remiss, the teenagers would make an indignant fuss. Also, the Harvard team spent more time with the mothers than the adolescents and this left them jealous and demoralized.

In the midst of personnel and housekeeping problems, the program struggled on. As part of the eudcational training provided for the mothers they visited many educational facilities in the area: private schools as Shady Hill and Montessori; universities as Northeastern, M.I.T., Harvard; mental health clinics, educational services cooperated to Frank Reisman's Harlem program in New York. Guest speakers came in from universities in the surrounding area and mothers went to the universities to talk about their program. They were excited and more knowledgeable about education and what was available to them. Many began to think about finishing high school and learning marketable skills.

The program with the mothers was materializing at a slow pace. The teenage program never did. Before Commonwealth Service Corps funding most of the attention had been focused on the teenagers as the crux of the program. After the funding it was turned toward the mothers with considerable resentment from the teenagers. There was discussion around giving teenagers groups of children separately from the mothers or having them work with the mothers' pre-school children in the mornings. However, these ideas never materialized because the teenagers became uncontrollable and continued sources of irritation.

The early months of Playroom 81 was a time of uncertainty, groping, confusion, and flaring resentments. One of the Harvard team reports, "Looking back on it all now, it seems that we did nothing during the first months of the program but make fresh starts...much of what we hoped to do never materialized." (Belenky's Journal, p. 267-268)

In February the mothers, spurred on by Jim Reed, began to redecorate the basement which was damp with dark green walls and dirty, uncleanable, concrete floors. Harvard supplied the paint money and the program shut down for six weeks. Even though momentum was lost as far as the program went, the finished product was impressive. The Boston Housing Authority put in a linoleum tile floor and the area began to look like a Playroom.

During this period fierce conflicts erupted within the Harvard team itself. Part of the problem was generated by lack of role clarification. Initially, Bob Belenky was Director and Researcher of the program. Jim Reed was hired in the capacity of Program Director, although Bob held the power since he had the final say on decisions and funding. The situation was complicated and in retrospect still unclear. Jim feels that Bob undercut his position, put him in the role of the person who cracked the whip and made demands while Bob held the role of pacifier and giver of good things (money, trips, lunches). Bob, on the other hand, feels Jim was hypersensitive about his subordinate position and being treated like an "Uncle Tom". Despite the perceptions or misperceptions that contributed to the difficulties between them, there was a basic difference in their approach that made effective collaboration unlikely. Jim was direct, goading and insistent that the mothers learn to mobilize their resources and do things for themselves. Bob favored a democratic approach where options were present and the mothers made decisions as to what they wanted to do, if anything. So much time and energy went into this conflict between Jim and Bob that there was little consolidated direction or support available to the mothers.

To salvage the situation, an attempt was made at role redefinition. Jim was to be the Director of the project and Bob the Researcher, spending less time at the Playroom and more time writing about it. Perhaps things changed in name only because when there was disagreement on a tactical procedure, Bob again made the final decision. This was illustrated when Jim wanted to fire one of the teenage aids. There had been constant but controllable friction between Jim and the aid centering around her defiances of requests he would make of her. It reached the boiling point when she reneged on an agreement to answer the telephone one afternoon in February while the Harvard team was at a meeting. Returning to a locked door, Jim became infuriated and criticized the aid severly on her conduct in general. He delivered the ultimatum that either he or she had to go. Bob and Jay took the position that the aid should not go. Even though she had a nasty tongue, she had worked hard, come a long way, and in a large measure the argument had been provoked by Jim Reed. After a short cooling off period Jim, encouraged by Bob, made the decision to return to the program.

It was decided that Jim would be Program Director in fact and Bob would spend more time at the University writing a proposal to the Shadow Faculty for the following year and making arrangements for their educational program. From that point on, however, the relationship between Bob and Jim progressively deteriorated. The friction became so blatant that Jim announced at an open house before the community people, officials from the Boston Housing Development and the universities that he did not agree with Bob. In fact, he thoroughly disagreed with him on almost every point. The mutual anger was becoming chronic at this point and occasionally the mothers were being drawn into the conflict.

So much of the Harvard team's energy was consumed in their disagreements that there was little left over for consolidated direction and support. In the face of this, the mothers pulled together and away from the Harvard team by having evening meetings of their own. Mrs. S., who had been elected President of the group in January was becoming more active and the meetings were held at her house. However, the day-to-day program was still deteriorating in that there were fewer structured activities for the children and more random running around during the program hours.

The mothers did begin to make contacts with community agencies and got a lawyer to incorporate them as non-profit organization. This was designed to encourage the possibility of obtaining funds from the United Charities and private organizations. Less and less the mothers wanted Harvard or a program Director and wanted to run the program themselves.

The Playroom continued through to the summer of 1966 in roughly the same fashion; the Harvard team were disagreeing among themselves, the mothers were groping for some specific structure, and most of the teenagers were leaving. As one mother phrased it, people were "stumbling together". Consequently, the quality of the program was variable. At times there was little organization or control over the children and they ran about randomly, yelling, fighting, and playing. At other times, the mothers, making more effort, contained them in groups where they worked on different arts and crafts projects.

When the program was structured, it was a new and worthwhile experience for many of the children. Previously, they had amused themselves in whatever way they could in the cement court yard or on the street. Now they had a place to go and enjoyable things to do which kept them off the street, and allowed them to accomplish something constructive. Unfortunately, these benefits to the children were not always available.

June 1966 came and with it money from Harvard for the summer program. In addition, five members of the National Teacher Corps were available to help in planning and executing activities for the children. However, there was still little structure or adequate planning. Bus trips were scheduled one day a week, the children were taken to parks, swimming areas, older ones played volleyball while the younger ones rode bicycles and pedal cars around the basketball court. Several times the mothers took their own children on overnight camping trips and for all there were arts and crafts activities. As in the past, the program was variable. All mothers did not always show up, or if they did, they were late. Meetings scheduled for 10:00 a.m. rarely began before 10:30 a.m. Frequently coffee and chatting were more interesting than the business of the day. Morale and group cohesiveness were low. Irritations developed but was not expressed openly.

Irritation with one mother was particularly notable. Her attendance was irregular, frequently tardy, she did not carry her share of the programming, and was over protective of her son's impulsive behavior. Little was said to her and in general all of the mothers, even the President and leader of the group got caught in a bind. They were fearful of asserting their authority to insure more efficiency and felt they had to stay on pleasant terms with each other because they were friends or least had to work together.

There was much urging on the part of the Harvard team for the mothers to do more planning and get themselves better organized. It didn't happen in spite of all the hours of meetings spent talking about it. Responsibility for the failure seems to be shared by both sides.

As late as August 1966, nine months after the program was initiated, the Harvard team (exclusive of J. Reed, who had resigned to accept another position) were unable to clearly define or commit themselves to specific goals. Was Playroom 81 to be merely a playroom, a community verture in integration, a university or indigenous training site, or an innovator in altering policies and practices within the Boston School system. Each possibility was fraught with numerous questions about the scope of the program, the central emphasis, the means of implementation, and what was reasonably expectable. No decisions were finalized and the mothers were told they had to decide what they wanted the program to be, although initially a pre-school program was felt to have need priority.

Much of the confusion could be traced back to this basic indecision. Plans of action depend upon what is to be accomplished and if one does not know, one cannot take relevant action. The activities designed for the mothers appeared random and varied; visiting schools, and recreational facilities, a Harlem poverty program, university speaking engagements, and numerous visitors. Overall, these things contributed more to general cultural exposure than assistance in running a recreation program for children. At the same time, in this first year there was little or no training in child management, program planning or activities. A mere playroom seemed to be too small a project to be worthy.

Confusion about the role the Harvard team should play in Playroom 81 persisted. They had attempted to structure Playroom 81 in such a way that the mothers had final responsibility for decisions. The mothers, having lived sheltered lives, not in wealth but in poverty, did not have the experience to enable them to make many of the decisions required of them. They were accustomed to waiting for things to happen rather than making them happen and were not comfortable asserting themselves in the educational, political and social world beyond the confines of their neighborhood. They were housewives with potential but no previous formal training in running a program. New and different skills were demanded and different pressures were being exerted upon them.

This effort to encourage more independent functioning on the part of the mothers placed the Harvard team in a difficult bind. The overall responsibility for the success of the program rested with them since the program was sponsored by the Research and Development Center at Harvard. When the mothers were told they had the authority to make final decisions and wavered in indecision and inefficiency, the Harvard team became frustrated, wanting a more effective program but having tied their own hands in terms of their rights to make specific demands for performance.

Another modus operandi which made consistent programming difficult was the frequent shifts of ideas on the part of the Harvard team. All ideas sounded exciting to the mothers who were willing to pursue them. However, before they could get started on one thing, another emerged that had more urgency. This was part of the barage of activities and ideas that confronted people ill-equipped to evaluate them or follow through on them independently.

On the other side, members did not carry through on assigned tasks, and the general attitude was most casual. They failed to appear without giving notice, arrived late without concern and often spent more time sitting and talking than working.

People were urged to be prompt, get moving, on the ball, etc., but there were no levers for enforcement, and so, no one changed. Active group members were reluctant to exert any pressure upon irresponsible members because they were afraid of creating hard feelings and then being unable to work with one another. Nevertheless, lack of participation was resented, especially when everyone was paid the same amount regardless of what they did or when they arrived. This unspoken resentment smoldered and helped to undermine the morale of the entire group.

There were also some realistic difficulties presented by the physical facilities of Playroom 81. When not outside, all play groups were conducted in one large room. Children, sensitive or hypersensitive to stimulation, were easily distracted which further contributed to disorganization. Also, the telephone was in another room, and the group leader had to leave frequently to answer it, disrupting whatever discussion was in process. Materials presented another source of irritation. They were ordered in small amounts, and while there was a small locked storage area, they often were not returned to the locked area. Supply shortages were frequent. There was a strong tendency to do things on a day-to-day, last-minute basis, so that too much energy was expended unnecessarily in meeting deadlines.

From the beginning, the morale level appeared to be cyclic. Periods of high morale would gradually dissipate through inactivity and a sense of futility that nothing was being accomplished would pervade the group. Finally realizing things had to change if the program was to continue, they would reunite and reinvest their energy in the program and add more structure. The beginning and end of the summer of 1966 were low morale points.

September was again a period of renewed beginning. Arrangements were made with Wheelock College to have some of their students use the Playroom as a pracitcuum site. Each morning two students directed a play hour in conjunction with one of the mothers of the pre-school children in order to free the other mothers for their own morning program. Weekly schedules were reworked and posted for all to see. Tables and cupboards were rearranged to make more effective working areas. Drs. Belenky and Clark set aside specific hours for classes in child development. In addition, they took turns running the afternoon program once each week as a demonstration for the mothers. A short evaluation period of what was effective and ineffective about the program followed to stimulate the mothers' critical thinking.

Several trips were taken in the second year. Mothers were escorted to book stores to buy class books but had fewer luncheons and pleasure trips. However, all money exclusive of the salaries, was supplied by Harvard so they had to work for nothing unless they wanted to. Survival of the program did not actually depend upon them, regardless of what was said. They seemed to realize this because they proceeded at a casual pace, as if nothing would ever happen--someone would always be there to do things for them--somehow.

Several mothers left the group around this time, one because of health, another to take a better paying position in a day care program, and a third was asked to leave because she created antagonism by not carrying her share of responsibility. For a number of months only six to eight mothers were working and they experienced some difficulty running all the groups they had planned. It was especially difficult when members didn't show up and no one was assigned to their children.

Initially, any mother who showed interest was accepted but with experience they tended to become somewhat more selective and at least interview with the possibility in mind that not every individual is suitable. This practice emerged with a slowly growing sense of confidence that they were capable of accomplishing more than they had.

In November 1966 room dividers 4' x 12' were purchased. This allowed separate areas for different activities and group composition was restructured on the basis of age and interest, in contrast to age alone. The variety of activities offered also increased: in contrast to arts and crafts--drawing, painting, paper construction, bead stringing, there was also cooking, sewing, dancing, and games for boys. In cooking class the children copied recipes from the blackboard one day and made the recipe the next day. In sewing class, they cut out their own patterns, learned to stitch on electric machines and made A line jumpers and pant suits. The children were generally enthusiastic about these groups. Activities were geared primarily for girls and the boys felt somewhat neglected. This was due in part to the fact that the program was run by mothers, most of whom were more comfortable with small children and girls, but did not feel they understood boys well enough to work effectively with them.

An open house to have parents visit the playroom and acquaint themselves with the mothers was attempted. About 80 invitations were sent out but only several parents responded. Typically, it had been difficult to get the community involved in programs for its own betterment. The mothers extended personal invitations, invitations written individually or in a community newspaper, but nothing seemed to make enough impact to mobilize community activities.

The mothers also undertook extra program endeavors. With the Brothers' 10, a men's group begun by Jim Reed, they planned a New Year's party. They hired a hall, a band and sold tickets. The planning experience was profitable but financially they were not successful. Nevertheless, there was enthusiasm about who was going, the latest fashions and dresses that were being made and bought. A few months later the mothers combined their efforts to give needed financial assistance to the only teenager who had remained out of the original group. A chicken dinner netted $75.

With the arrival of January and only six months of Harvard subsidy remaining, more attention was turned to writing proposals for continued funding of Playroom 81. A local woman with considerable experience in programming for pre-school children was hired to draft the proposal. About the same time, the mothers were beginning to express feelings that they should receive higher pay for the time they were putting into the program. Also, if they were to look for work elsewhere, they should have some way of getting credit for what they had learned at the Playroom. As matters stood, they had merely the status of housewives and some without the benefit of completing high school. They felt that what they had accomplished was worth more recognition than they were receiving. It was even possible that they could fill a supervisory role for mothers wanting to learn how to run a recreation program in a different location. With this, Drs. Belenky and Clark began exploring possibilities of having the mothers receive credit for their practical experience and acquired knowledge of psychology. No requirements could be waived for Harvard Extension courses. The most likely prospect was Northeastern University. It was possible for the mothers to receive course credit, provided they passed the University exams. They could take the course work at the Playroom but were subject to the same knowledge requirements as others.

Although numerous weeks were spent talking about this plan, it did not materialize. It seemed unrealistic that women, whose hours outside the Playroom were filled with household duties and who were not academically oriented would complete the hours of work required.

In the process of formulating the funding proposal, the mothers were asked what they would really like to do. It was the impression that this question was intended to be answered within the context of the Playroom, but it was answered in terms of their overall preferences. Interestingly, only two or three out of seven or eight said they would prefer to work with children. Others mentioned positions as secretaries, lab technicians and domestic science. This seemed further reason why they would be unlikely to devote themselves to the hours required to complete course work in child psychology when this was not their major area of interest.

In the interests of encouraging performance and motivation, the mothers were led to believe they deserved higher pay. To an objective observer coming in from the outside and judging the Playroom 81 program by the standards of other child care programs, this was not true. In the mornings there were times when only two or three mothers would appear. Drifting in at 10:15 or 10:30, the first half hour could easily be spent finding children, combing hair, chatting over coffee. Afternoon hours from 2:00 to 3:00 were to be spent planning the afternoon program. Again, members drifted in between 2:30 and 3:00. If the children arrived at 3:30 p.m., the mothers might not even get up until the children stood before them asking where they could hang their coats. Even with a lack of variety in the program, the mothers frequently did not begin setting up for activities until after the children had arrived. They could lose as much as 10 to 15 minutes with children standing around watching them. Program implementation was not always so casual but such a program would not stand scrutiny if it were to constitute a community service for which staff members were to be paid $5,000 to $6,000.

In making proposal plans, the question of relocation recurred again and again. It was the dream of the President of Playroom 81 to have a day care program which included baby sitting services for pre-school children. This would allow mothers who are now confined to their apartments to take jobs or become involved in activities outside the home. However, Department of Public Safety regulations were not met by the physical facilities of the Playroom; the ground level is too low, and exits are inadequate. Questions were raised as to whether they should move to a location that had been offered outside the Housing Development or try to induce the housing authorities to give them a remodeled first floor apartment. The first offer did not hold over time and no action was taken on the second possibility. As of June 1967, immediate plans were to remain in their present location.

Over the year, the mothers have found the psychology courses, particularly the child observation session run by J. Clark to be one of the most helpful training experiences open to them. Several children in the pre-school group were given a task while the mothers observed their behavior and the interactions among them. They recorded what they saw and then discussed the meanings of and reasons for the behavior. These classes increased the mothers' awareness of many things the children actually did and the varied motivations that can lie behind one apparently simple act. In every day living it had the effect of making the mothers question why their children did something before they assumed that the children had misbehaved. Consequently, they talked with their children more and spanked them less with apparent improvement in the willingness of some children to obey them.

The course in child psychology taught by Dr. Belenky was more obscure for the mothers because text books were on college level in difficulty and subjects were not directly relevant to child management. A sample of the texts used were Play Therapy by Virginia Axline, and When We Deal With Children edited by Fritz Redl. Much of this writing was technical and required a fairly broad background in psychology to understand the terminology and fit meanings into context. One of Dr. Belenky's intentions was to decrease the mothers' negative attitudes about academic learning by having them master fairly complex material. He stressed that they could understand the meaning if they focused upon the words they knew. Sitting around the conference table, mothers took turns reading and interpreting paragraphs from homework reading assignments. Gradually objections increased because they could not understand what they were reading and saw no point in it. Instead of promoting confidence in their intellectual ability, the more frequent effect was to further undercut it. This idea was reflected by several of the mothers in casual conversation.

Additionally, the mothers were confused by the numerous visitors to the Playroom. Dr. Belenky had numerous students from his psychology courses at Boston College use the Playroom as a practicum setting. Some knocked on doors to develop skills in interviewing and researching community attitudes, others tested, observed, or interviewed Playroom children, while others monitored his psychology course. The mothers did not understand fully why so many were drifting in and out and, since they all took notes, began to feel somewhat like "guinea pigs." With "people coming down and looking us over", they were resentful but did not express it openly. Regardless of how much they were encouraged to be expressive they had not yet developed enough independence and trust to be critical of professionals.

From February 1967 to May 1967, Playroom programming took second place to proposal writing. Mothers were not entirely satisfied with the proposal by Mrs. L., feeling it was too limited and made them look like the "helpless poor". In the finished proposal this section was used to present the immediate and short range needs of the program while a more detailed form was prepared to describe the long range plans. (see Appendix A)

Senator Edward Kennedy visited the Playroom unexpectedly and the following day an article entitled "Playroom Deserves Aid" appeared in the Boston Globe (see Appendix B). Plans were underway to visit individuals in the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington D.C. in search of financial support for the following year, and Senator Kennedy's assistance was enlisted. Seven mothers, J. Clark and Dr. Belenky and Director of the Commonwealth Service Corps for the area went to Washington by bus in April 1967 and remained for four days. Seeing new places, eating in different restaurants, visiting famous sites, and the numerous funny things that always happen to a travelling group were enjoyable, but funding for the program was refused repeatedly. They walked from morning until night and returned home empty handed. Monies previously available for poverty programs had been cut back and channeled into the Vietnam War. High morale prior to the trip slumped and the program suffered. No immediate hope of funding was available and to add to the dismay, heavy rains flooded the basement with several inches of sewer water. It looked as if the Playroom might close permanently. However, the President of Playroom 81, believing deeply in the program, rallied with more determination in the face of discouragement. The housing authorities cleared the area of water after several days. The Playroom paid for fumigation and things got underway again.

Senator Kennedy's office contacted ABCD and it was hoped funds might be available. Again hope was extended and the proposal submitted. They had only to wait.

Toward the end of February and early March the President and several members of the group, seeing the program falter, realized that additional outside help was needed. A few mothers resisted hiring a program director, fearing a take over of authority. Miss T., a woman with previous programming experience was hired for two months since funds were not available for a longer period. She assisted in organizing groups and activities for children and while she was there the program was generally more active. Overall, the mothers reacted favorably. Initially, they resented her direct and forthright manner; as they got to know her, their attitude softened but they still felt she did rather than taught to do--they needed the latter.

In April there was another flare up. Dr. Belenky had rewritten the history of the first year of the program's operation entitled, "Where is PEAR," a report summarizing PEAR's activities for the 1965-66 academic year, and distributed approximately 25 copies to interested persons. He did this without first consulting the mothers and when they read it, reactions ranged from anger to disappointed disbelief that they had been betrayed. They felt the recording of specific instances and general overtones of the article were condescending. A reference to a husband who had volunteered time on the program, preferring welfare to work, mothers calling Jim Reed "Jim Baby" were particularly irksome. To the more casual reader, these things would not stand out, but to the mothers, sensitive to nuances of prejudice and condescendence in whites trying to uplift the unfortunate poor, it was a violation of their dignity as human beings. They had trusted Dr. Belenky, thought him to be their friend and once again they had been let down. The intensity of their reaction was increased by the fact that Dr. Belenky had progressively made himself less available and Harvard was really discontinuing funding as they had said they would. The overall effect was to erect emotional barriers against Dr. Belenky in particular and to a lesser extent against outsiders in general. They began to look much more critically at the Harvard team and reinforce their attitudes that they wanted to make the program independently successful without the assistance or interference of Harvard.

Mrs. S. even called Harvard and voiced group dissatisfaction with the way Dr. Belenky had handled the matter.

Jay Clark continued to try to smooth the rough spots and weld greater group cohesion. A gripe session was introduced and Miss D., a social worker, was made available for group discussion around personal or program problems that arose. This resource was present before the incident with Dr. Belenky, not as a consequence of it. Mothers were beginning to directly confront one another about shirking their duties and leaving work to others.

In May Mrs. S., the President of Playroom 81, and Mrs. H. attended an eight-week teacher aid course at Garland College. This was the first opportunity for formal training outside the Playroom seminars that was presented to the mothers. They felt it was worthwhile and their attendance presented only one deterrent in relation to the Playroom program. Meetings were held each morning requiring two staff members to be absent every morning for eight weeks. Initially no one was named to replace the president of the group but the morning meetings became so ineffective that another member was appointed to assume responsibility in her absence. Attendance and punctuality improved but morale and group cohesion was affected by the continued absence of the president of the group.

Beginning in June the Monday morning meetings were reinstituted and Mrs. S. actively began to realize that firmer demands had to be made upon the mothers if the program was to be successful. Instead of asking opinions as to whether they would like to resume Monday morning meetings, she simply sent out a memo stating that all mothers were expected to be there. She, also, was beginning to assert more independence as a leader. The Director of the Regional Commonwealth Service Corps who had agreed to continuing subsidization of the mother's the following year made himself more available to them for consultation around immediate planning for the day-to-day program and specification of future objectives. He stressed that they had to made their own decisions and put more effort into doing whatever would emerge from the program. In a real way it was to become the work of their hands--and their responsibility.

As of June 1967 no final decisions had been reached regarding funding of the program for the following year. Proposals had been sent to private foundations and ABCD still remained the most hopeful project. In the event that no support should be forthcoming the mothers had decided to continue independently and raise money through projects they would initiate. Drs. Belenky and Clark planned to make consultation time available at the mothers request.

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# CHAPTER V

## Method of Evaluation

The Playroom 81 program was evaluated by observation of the program in progress and interviews with involved persons. The researchers observed and noted morning and afternoon programs several times a week from August 1966 through May 1967. Impressions of the program were secured through interviewing the indigenous and professional staff and other individuals engaged in the project in a less intense but meaningful way.

More systematic measures of program evaluation were not attempted for several reasons: (1) The number involved was so small (6-10) that meaningful statistical measures could not be used for processing data obtained. (2) The variety of students and visitors coming to the Playroom and the frequent spontaneity of day-to-day program planning prohibited controlled evaluation. That is, the continual fluctuation in variables affecting the program made it impossible to attribute changes to any specific set of circumstances. (3) The mothers, primarily interested in the practical aspects of the program, were reticent to discuss their impressions of the program either through questionnaires or interviews. They appeared reluctant to answer questions about the program or why they held the opinions they did.

It was decided that a descriptive and process evaluation of the program would be the most realistic evaluative goal. Setting up community programs in disadvantaged areas was a new experience for the Harvard team and pinpointing relevant variables affecting the program which might serve as a basis for later systematic research was given first priority.

## A, Interview Outlines

Interviews were formal and open ended. The general outline for different interviews is as follows:

### 1. Indigenous Staff

a. How were you introduced to Playroom 81?

b. What effect has Playroom 81 had upon your personal development in general and in specific upon your views regarding education, educational facilities, recreational and other resource facilities, bringing up and managing children, their values, interests, and life goals?

c. What is your impression of the way the mothers function in the group?

d. What, if any, changes have you noted in the children who come to the Playroom?

e. What improvements are needed in the program and how could they be made?

f. What contribution does Playroom 81 make to the Mission Hill community?

2. Professional Staff

a. General impressions of the Playroom 81 program.

b. Impressions of interaction among Harvard team members.

c. Ideal ways of setting up a program such as Playroom 81.

d. Factors that contributed to difficulties encountered in the Playroom organization.

e. Contribution of Playroom 81 to the community and indigenous staff.

3. Children Attending Playroom 81

a. How did you hear about Playroom 81?

b. How often do you attend?

c. Do you go to other clubs?

d. Have you made new friends there?

e. What do you like about and learn at Playroom 81?

4. Persons From Other Organizations: Commonwealth Service Corps, Wheelock College, Northeastern University (programs for adult women), APAC (Area Planning Action Council).

a. Impressions of Playroom 81.

b. Ideal organization for programs like Playroom 81.

c. What, if any, need does Playroom 81 meet in the community?

d. Impressions of the Harvard team.

5. Community Residents

a. Have you heard or visited Playroom 81?

b. Impressions of the Playroom.

c. Do you have children between four and twelve years and do they attend?

e. Are you interested in knowing more about the program?

f. Do you feel the community needs such a program? Why?

g. Additional comments.

## B. Impressions of Playroom 81

Content of the interviews with Playroom 81 participants are summarized below. Anonymity of the speakers is maintained because it encouraged franker discussion of the interviewee's impressions of the program. Additionally, all persons interviewed knew one another and labelling the sources of opinions could contribute to unnecessary misunderstandings and resentments since most interviewees were closely involved in the program and many comments were of a personal nature. Anonymity was dropped in discussions of the Harvard team since each member assumed a different role and the team interaction itself played a central part in the development of the Playroom 81 program.

### 1. Indigenous Staff Impressions of Playroom 81

Indigenous group composition has varied over the year and one-half that Playroom 81 has been in operation. Five of the original members are still involved. As members resigned, new ones have been added, giving a total of five newer members of approximately three to six months duration. Older members were interviewed in the fall of 1966 and again in the spring of 1967. Newer members have been interviewed only once. Impressions are summarized below.

#### a. The Indigenous Staff's Introduction to Playroom 81

Most mothers stated they heard about Playroom 81 from their friends, the Mission Hill Civic Association, or the Commonwealth Service Corps. They became involved through looking for nursery school and recreational facilities for their own children or simply feeling their children could benefit by being in the program. Some had older children and were interested in making a contribution outside the home in their free time. For others, it was primarily the need to interact with people beyond the confining walls of their apartments where they were tied down with small children.

#### b. Effect of Playroom 81 on the Indigenous Staff's Personal Development

Overall, Playroom 81 has contributed to the personal growth of each of the mothers, although the areas and degree of development have varied.

### 1. General Effects of Personal Development

All of the mothers felt they had gained more confidence in their ability to do things: they express themselves more readily in a group then they had before coming to the Playroom and several described their previous tendency to sit silently in a meeting, fearful of expressing ideas because they felt they could never be as good as the next person's. They might be laughed at and people would certainly think they were stupid. After a period of exposure and listening to others' ideas, they realized that the ideas expressed were not too different from their own. Others just had more confidence and it was up to them to speak up. Additionally, in working with the children they had done many new things that had never imagined themselves doing: running arts and crafts groups, teaching rudimentary skills as cooking and sewing, and talking to many visitors about the program, etc.

Others mentioned that their experience at the Playroom had helped them become more organized in getting things done. There was less procrastination, and more ability to complete projects which they had started. In the beginning of their Playroom experience they would become discouraged at the least difficulty encountered and give up whatever they were attempting. Also, there was a tendency to promise to check on some detail and then forget about it or undertake so many that they would become discouraged by all they had to do.

Numerous mothers mentioned with surprise that all of them, white or Negro, shared common problems. They were not really different as they had thought. Some mothers had had unpleasant experiences with persons of a different color or stereotypes had grown up over the years and they did not like their feelings of prejudice. They had hoped interaction with people of a different race would soften this... and it did. They were all people with the same kind of hopes, fears, and disappointments.

For several, it was helpful to get out of the house and have adults to talk to and meaningful and interesting things to do. They were less tired and got almost as much housework done as they had before. The daily routine had consisted of housework and watching TV. Since Playroom 81 there was more physical and intellectual activity and less fatigue, or when they were tired, it was "in a better way".

### 2. Effects on Indigenous Staff's Ideas Related to Education

All mothers interviewed in the fall of 1966 were enthusiastic about their increased awareness of educational and recreational facilities which had been provided by the trips. They expressed a desire to complete high school and/or gain further training now that they knew opportunities were available. New mothers, interviewed for the first time in the spring of 1967 also mentioned a broadened awareness of people and events resulting from their experiences at the

Playroom. However, time and confrontation with the day-to-day running of the program may have lessened this enthusiasm. Several mothers stated in a second interview that the trips contributed little to the development of better program organization and even mentioned that the time could have been put to better use through more training in activities skills.

The desire to obtain further education in the fall of 1966 was translated into fact in the spring of 1967. Two mothers participated in an eight-week course for teacher aids at Garland College from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon each morning and several others were eager to join if there had been openings.

To date the mothers have not taken any other formal steps to participate in university extension or adult education courses although two mothers plan fall enrollment in a university extension course. Another mother who had stated initially that she did not intend to pursue her education further, finding enough satisfaction in her children's accomplishments, recently mentioned that she wanted to further her training in children's work.

Several mothers openly or implicitly indicated that they were not interested in returning to formal classes to further their education. One who does want to continue expressed the fear that she would not be as smart as the others. She recalls that she had always been afraid in school, feeling her ability to be inferior, and still felt that way. Nevertheless, the sense of satisfaction she received from making a worthwhile contribution at the Playroom and the awareness that her life could be more rewarding if she pursued further training was beginning to offset her fear that she would not be able to compete successfully with others.

### 3. Effects on Ideas About Children

One or two mothers felt there were no differences in the way they handled children in general or their own in particular, but by far the majority of mothers expressed considerable change in the way they thought about and managed children now. Much of this change was related back to the psychology and observation classes run by Dr. Belenky and J. Clark. They had become more observant of many little things the children did from day to day, began to listen to what they said more carefully, and wonder why they did and said things, and realized there were many differences in children--they were not always the same and should not be treated as such. Consequently, mothers talk more, listen more, to their children and scold and spank them less. Several have even come to recognize problems that needed special attention in their own children and have taken steps toward securing help.

### C. Indigenous Staff's Impressions of Their Own Group Functioning

When questioned, most of the mothers felt they were getting along "O.K." or "better" as a group, but were somewhat reluctant to specifics. Some obvious sources of irritation were mothers who "stay out for nothing", who simply fail to show up without giving notice and leave their work to be covered by others.

Children are left running around without anything to do, getting into mischief and making things generally difficult for everyone. Annoyances were not voiced openly and created dissention among the mothers. By the Spring of 1967 there were indications these aggravations were being made known, sometimes to the point of vigorous verbal discussions.

Racial prejudice was mentioned by a number of mothers. Two acknowledged that their initial interest in the program was partially motivated by a desire to get to know better people of a different race. They felt greater exposure would break down minor prejudices within themselves with which they were dissatisfied. Several mothers registered surprise that all of them had a lot in common, regardless of different racial backgrounds; they shared the same kind of problems, worries, daily routines. Previous to the Playroom experience, they had felt people of another color were different and now they were finding many similarities among themselves. Only one mother said she thought some racial prejudice did exist, and felt that for the most part the group tried not to think about color.

There was some feeling among white mothers that the program was primarily for Negroes and some feeling among Negroes that white children had more facilities available to them than Negro children (because of greater recreational resources in the Mission Hill project.

### d. Indigenous Staff's Impressions of Changes in the Playroom Children

The mothers noted more apparent changes in the pre-school children than in the children attending the after-school program. They recall that as a group the pre-school children tended to cling less to their mothers, play more cooperatively with other children, and in general were more friendly and open as a result of their Playroom experience.

The older children showed less dramatic but consistent progress. They were more responsive to the mothers' requests, more respectful, more controllable, and less easily upset. Initially, children came and left the Playroom as they pleased, were saucy and refused to comply with the mothers' requests, would begin fights in their various groups and run around helter-skelter. With time, demands for behavior became more specific and the children were asked to leave if they could not control their own behavior. These measures were effective for when they returned the next day they were generally more cooperative.

### e. Indigenous Staff's Impressions of Needed Program Improvement

All mothers agreed the program needed more organization. They felt they would be more conscientious in their attendance and in their general attitude toward the work of the Playroom. Organization has been somewhat better since the groups were structured in terms of age and interest rather than age alone. However, better facilities, more equipment, and a more systematic way of ordering supplies was needed. Group leaders frequently ran out of materials because they were ordered in small amounts and not returned to the storage areas.

Several mothers mentioned that they would like to see the members better trained as teachers so they could offer a wider choice of activities to the children. Some of the present activities as art classes and free play do not hold their interest. The addition of a program director, although temporary, was helpful in getting activities underway but only one mother stated specifically that a permanent director would be an asset. More frequently expressed was the fear that a highly trained person given authority over the program would eventually take it out of the hands of the mothers.

One mother also mentioned that the program should start earlier in the day and should not be closed so often. (The mothers had decided to close the Playroom on general and school holidays in order to be home with their children).

### f. Indigenous Staff's Impressions Regarding the Contribution of Playroom 81 to the Mission Hill Community

When first interviewed about the contribution of the Playroom program to the community, the indigenous staff indicated that they felt it provided a recreational area where children could enjoy themselves. When they reviewed the effects of the program in June 1967 they also felt it provided educational opportunities for the children; they learned new things about cooking, sewing, arts and crafts, numbers and words through games.

Traditionally, the community has been difficult to involve in neighborhood programs. While community lethargy persisted, the mothers of the indigenous staff were becoming involved with the local school system: several meetings had been held between the mothers and the school principal regarding the indigenous staff serving as teacher aids. No arrangements had yet been finalized but further meetings were scheduled for the fall of 1967.

## 2. Professional Staff Impressions

### a. General Impressions of Playroom 81

The professional staff's overall impression of the program was similar to that of the mothers: more organization is needed. Nevertheless, over the two-year period the program had been in operation the level of organization had increased. In the beginning the indigenous staff consisted of women who devoted their time to being housewives and were completely inexperienced in running a children's recreational program. Gradually they had become familiar with the procedures necessary to carry on activities and on many afternoons the program ran well. However, there was still a casualness on the part of the indigenous staff that interfered with efficiency: some sat around and chatted instead of attending to duties, failed to appear or left on paid time to do something which was greater immediacy for them. The professional staff was uncertain whether they themselves or the mothers should provide the initiative for greater organizational efficiency.

One of the most impressive and satisfying results for the professional staff was the personal growth of some of the mothers. Although the variation was wide, overall they were more articulate, definitive, aware of themselves, others, and the world around them and had greater confidence in their ability to be productive. This process is by no means complete but it has begun and for several will probably continue even if the Playroom 81 program should not continue beyond June 1967.

Regarding the actual running of the program, consistent planning, good group communications, and a chain of command were high on the priority list of skills to be further developed. Program planning was improved but still sporadic; for example, the 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. hour designated for planning was sometimes utilized, but frequently the mothers spent the hour chatting or arrived late. Group communications were becoming more open, but some mothers were still not comfortable discussing interpersonal or program difficulties in a group. Related to the communications difficulty was impulsive decision-making with little discussion of the pros and cons involved.

### b. Impressions of Interactions Among Their Own Team Members

After a year of "working" together and another year of absence from one another, feelings remain intense between

R. Belenky and J. Reed. Even in retrospect, the relationship in itself and its ramifications are complex. Because of the subjectivity of reactions, no attempt has been made to analyze the relationships. Rather, team members' impressions of one another were summarized to give the reader the flavor of the interaction.

Jim's impressions were as follows: he recalls that in joining the Harvard team he was not certain what was expected of him. He stood in awe of Harvard, the monolith of educational prestige, and in uncertainity of his own strengths and ability to contribute. He soon recognized that bob "knew how to play the game" much better than he and resented Bob's going alone to collect petty cash from Harvard or to make arrangements on some program activity. He wanted to learn "the game" too. Jim felt mothers tended to turn to Bob when they needed money or advice and this undercut his position as program director. He recalls that Bob reasoned they came to him because he had better credentials for the job but Jim felt Bob set him up as the "bad guy" who demanded that the mothers become more productive and efficient while he (Bob) was loved because he had access to the money and consequently supplies or funding for activities (trips or special projects) which the mothers might want to plan. Also, the mothers were impressed by the prestige of Bob's credentials and all too frequently accepted what he said without question.

Jim felt Bob was paternalistic and condescending. Some of his involvement in the program was part of playing a "game"; he knew that it was important to be a white man, but a white man interested in a black man is even more important. Also, he quickly grew bored with the mother's meager efforts to raise money through cake sales and rather than let them wrestle over the problem for a few days would "run over to Harvard and get $150." Good at "superficial promotion", Bob avoided coming to grips with problems. He did not like "confrontation with adversity" but preferred to smooth over situations to make everyone feel better.

Bob's impressions were as follows: he recalls that he was equally disenchanted with Jim. Several months before Jim terminated with the program, Bob felt that it was impossible for them to work together. He characterizes the year as one of "hell and confusion". Although he thinks that the conflict between them might ultimately be boiled down to a black-white issue, the situation was also made difficult because Jim had little confidence in his ability to do things and the more rope he was given the more he panicked--he needed help in doing things. Actually, Jim was hypersensitive about being put in the position of an "Uncle Tom". Fearful of being used, he was constantly testing people and situations. "Convinced there was a plot, he pushed so hard that after a while there got to be a plot." For example, Bob and J. Clark's views were closer to one another's than they were to Jim's and he frequently construed this natural alliance as a contrived one. Finding it necessary to constantly adjust to one another they became more preoccupied with this process than with the program.

In retrospect, Bob feels that none of the Harvard team were particularly skillful in facilitating the development of Playroom 81 members without either taking over or withdrawing from the scene. They had a "cloudy vision" of how people should behave but nothing going in terms of the operations necessary. For example, they would say to the mothers, "you've got to get shaped up--get here on time" but not what ought to be done right now. He felt this technique was most painfully clear with Jim keep telling them, "you've got to get organized" and after two hours there was no more organization but there was a lot of guilt about not being organized.

Bob felt Jim wanted personal prominence from his role in the program. (Jim also felt Bob was playing "the game" for his own aggrandizement) Jim was sensitive about his position and strongly objected to not having a Harvard identification card even though it was Harvard's policy to give cards to faculty but not staff members; Jim fell into the last category. Refusal of the card seemed to represent his inferior status and not give adequate acknowledgement for what he was and could do.

Bob further adds that Jim felt he was functioning as Bob's assistant with no real authority when he was officially program director. Bob feels that the mothers tended to turn to him (Bob) with problems and that Jim felt it was because they would always come to a white man. However, Bob did have the credentials, it was an educational project, and Jim sometimes became so "huffy he scared everybody off". Bob felt he could not work with him and, with admitted dishonesty in retrospect, gave Jim more authority rather than fire him. Bob could not ask him to terminate because he felt the mothers favored Jim. Bob reasoned that it was their project; they were obviously ambivalent, and if Jim was to be fired, they should also find him intolerable.

During the first year, Jay tried to act as a mediator and peacemake in Jim and Bob's disagreements, more frequently agreeing with Bob's position since they had similar therapuetic orientations. Nevertheless, he tried to encourage bilateral expression of facts and hostility. Jim felt Jay was afraid to express opinions independently of Bob and reiterated his ideas; Bob felt Jay had a tendency to get academic and windy rather than down to the hard cold facts of the job that needed to be done.

From Jay's point of view, personality-wise Bob and Jim "were designed to irritate each other". They competed for the mother's attention and became overly preoccupied with their squabbles. Both had a tendency to renege on carrying through commitments and responsibilities. Jim would initiate projects with the mothers, talk about the projects, but not work closely enough with them on a personal basis to manage the details required to get the job done. Bob had some tendency to do this but frequently more through absence, particularly in the past year. In the Spring of 1966 Bob verbally committed himself to one-half time at the Playroom. He soon began to interpret half time as time to write and showed up less and less. His disappearances were well illustrated during the Washington trip in April. Bob and Jay were to spend time with the mothers visiting prospective funding sources. Jay spent the time with the mothers while "Bob was off picketing the White House". Bob was not exactly a resource for consistency; he was "so unbusiness like".

### c. Impressions of Ideal Ways of Setting Up Programs Such as Playroom 81

At the end of almost two years, the Harvard team did not have a precise formulation of how they would structure a new indigenous educational program. Jay was more specific than Bob and would gear the program more heavily in the direction of training. Being a counseling psychologist, he still places emphasis on training in interpersonal relationships and would have like the emerging program to evolve out of interpersonal growth through training rather than structured specifics that deal more exclusively with administration and details.

On the other hand, Bob vacillated and at times states he would make it even less structured than Playroom 81 was initially so that whatever emerged would come entirely from the indigenous persons involved. Jim felt the mothers should use group pressure tactics. If they did this, they could be out of Playroom 81 now and into quarters that could allow them a more comprehensive program. Much of their training should come through doing with support and supervision. He would like to see less emphasis on talking about feelings and more emphasis on handling them by action and a structured situation. Instead of sitting around discussing angry feelings, talk about how to alleviate the situations that create the frustration.

### d. Factors Contributing to Difficulties Encountered in Playroom Organization

The difficulties appear intimately related to the functioning of both the Harvard team and the mothers of Playroom 81. They will be reviewed briefly.

The Harvard team has always been uncertain of its role in Playroom 81, and there was never a clear contract delineating the lines of responsibility and authority. Consequently, the emphasis and focus for program planning varied among individuals. Jim wanted to so something to uplift the Negro community and began to feel the most important thing was to train and activate Negro men. He has stated frequently that it was important that all Negroes learn to stand on their own two feet. Bob tried to push the idea of extending the Harvard-Boston program where teenagers run a play school for children. Jay's orientation was consistently more psychotherapeutic with emphasis on creating a setting where counseling and training took place. Last, but not least, the mothers saw the program for small children as primary and the one for teenagers ancillary. For Bob, the order was reversed.

As a part of the differing styles of Bob and Jim which made working together well nigh impossible, their methods for a complishing even the goals they shared were separated by emphasis. Jim felt strongly that more discipline of the "shape up or ship out" variety was needed while Bob, in therapeutic fashion, tended to talk about the what and whys of what had happened. This difference is illustrated in regard to the teenagers whom Jim thought Bob psychologized and in response they developed a "mirror" relationship when they told Bob what they thought he wanted to hear. Jim wanted more direct confrontation in a program that would help them meet the real world where they were failing. Bob would argue that if the initiative for action would come from them it would be healthier, longer lasting, and an indication of real progress.

The Harvard team had been and were learning a great deal about community organization. One of the shortcomings expressed by each member was that they needed more skill in facilitating movement in others without taking over or withdrawing from the situation. Jim felt that he bombarded the mothers with things crucial for them to learn, but which they were not ready to accept. Bob and Jay indicated they did not feel comfortable handling authority and frequently tended to see it as punitive, something to avoid. The pendulum would then swing to the other extreme--laisse-faire with no structure and no demands. When something needed to be done there would be "windy discussions of feelings" rather than specific outlining of tasks appropriate to the situation. Greater structure had evolved but uncertainty persisted about it.

On the other side of the coin, the mothers contributed to the difficulty in the program because they were not tuned in to the day-to-day aspects of the program. Frequently the attitude was most casual and the degree of actual involvement by some members in the program was questionable.

#### e. Contributions to Playroom 81, to the Community and Indigenous Staff

As of the spring of 1967 contributions of the Playroom to the community were unclear because the community had been involved only minimally in the activities of the program. Several attempts had been made to have community members participate in programs. The indigenous staff had extended personal and written invitations to residents to visit the Playroom during an open house (of approximately 70 persons invited, only several came) and attend meetings and classes held for adults. The meager response was in keeping with the way the community had responded traditionally to other programs.

### 3. Impressions of Playroom 81 from Organizational Programs Related to the Program

#### a. General Impressions of Playroom 81

All persons interviewed felt Playroom 81 was a much needed community endeavor but confirmed the lack of organization and focus in the program; one interviewee stated that "after 1½ years there should be some organization." The same person questioned, until a few months ago, what the Harvard team were doing and because disorganization persisted, concluded that it might be a research project where they collected people's reactions.

Another interviewee noted that the program lacked "supervision, structure, and organization". Particularly in the first few months it was chaotic and children appeared to be running around aimlessly with no adult guidance. There was no evidence of any program structure other than that of allowing the children to come into the Playroom. Within the last several months more structure was evident (possible the proposal writing helped) but certainly not an expectable amount after two years of effort. An interviewee specified that the mothers were given too much democratic process when they needed more guidance. Absence of personnel policies for staff problems was cited as an instance of the lack of guidance and the difficulties it can produce. For example, an ineffective janitor had to be fired; there was a question of who should tell him and how he should be told. The mothers finally worked out some guidelines for handling personnel problems but then there was no one to carry them out. The president of the group ended up executing their decision but it was felt unfair to expect her to do it all alone.

In the beginning leadership impressed an interviewee as altering between an approach that was too directive and not directive enough. Another interviewee expressed the opinion that R. Belenky and J. Reed were unable to impart to the mothers their skills in working with children or a group. They usually ended up "telling the mothers what to do".

It was also suggested that the Harvard team in setting up their original program for the rehabilitation of teenagers did not take into account the needs expressed by the mothers for their children, and in attempting to work out their own plans were using the mothers.

One interviewee reported that there was some feeling within the community that the Harvard team stepped on toes in setting up the program. For example, the Mission Hill Civic Association had been trying to negotiate with the Housing Authority to clean and fix up the basement. When Harvard entered the picture they completed this project themselves and it was felt they should have worked with the Civic Association in reaching the goal.

Regarding the children coming to the program, one interviewee felt more children needed to be involved in the Playroom activities. Ten to forty children were accommodated daily when the program was capable of serving fifty. It was noted that many children hung around outside the Playroom instead of going in. It was felt that this was due, in part, to the disorganization of the program, but it had a circular effect of further increasing the disorganization as well as being a source of frustration to the mothers.

In a more positive vein, growth in the mothers as a result of the Playroom experience was cited by all interviewees related to organizations connected with the programming activities. One felt the greatest accomplishment of the Playroom was in letting mothers know that they were able to run a program. Other interviewees noted that they were more articulate, some were developing skill in handling groups, and another in "following through" and bringing some closure into discussions that had a tendency to become rambling. All were more able to express some negative feelings about professionals.

### b. Ideal Organization for Programs like Playroom 81

Ideas set forth for ideal organization are not detailed or comprehensive, but they point to shortcomings perceived in the program.

One interviewee felt that in setting up an indigenous program one should start with an ideal or goal that is specified and definite. Once the objectives are outlined, people committed to the goals should be recruited. In Playroom 81 almost anyone that expressed interest was hired--"Bob and Jim just took ten people". Some were not particularly interested and this hurt the program.

All persons interviewed felt the program should have included more training. One stated, "Professionals by virtue of the knowledge and skills they possess over that of the indigenous group have the responsibility of sharing this knowledge and teaching these skills". Mothers of Playroom 81 should have been the doers; instead the professionals spoke and acted for them and they did not have the experience of learning and succeeding.

In the beginning more people should have been brought in who could teach concrete program skills; a structure similar to that of the second year when an arts and crafts teacher and program director were hired. Learning to construct a program was more important than learning child development theory which was stressed in the psychology classes. Also, more should have been done to develop the natural skills of the mothers (they were not aware they had any). Instead, all major planning appeared to be done by professionals. For example, one mother displayed an organizational ability in planning and executing several successful lunches and it was felt that such natural skills should have been developed more highly than they have been.

### c. Community Needs Met by Playroom 81

Impressions of community needs met by Playroom 81 were not extensive. "It substitutes activity for inactivity" and it meets the needs expressed by the mothers, specifically a program for younger children. Long range effects cannot yet be assessed and community interviews (outlined in the following section) indicate the Mission Hill Extension community in particular recognize the needs for such programs but are not motivated to become involved beyond sending their children.

### d. Impressions of the Harvard Team

Since Harvard does not traditionally get involved with programs like Playroom 81, one interviewee felt the "Harvard people" were well motivated. However, they did not really know the community people; problems arose because of the way the program was implemented, morale was also lowered by Jim and Bob's constant arguing in which they involved other people and appeared unstable themselves.

The same interviewee felt that Jim, providing a needed masculine Negro figure to which the mothers and children could relate, but he frequently could not fill the role adequately. He "hammered on the racial issue"; was too authoritative with the teenagers, putting their jobs on the line so that there were notouts; competed with Bob for the mother's attention; was conflicted about the difference in qualifications and while he objected to Bob's finesse did not do all he could to learn from him.

Another interviewee felt that Bob was sometimes difficult to understand. He said a lot of vague things which initially sounded good, but, after some thought, one realized they were actually meaningless. While he says it's his project, he doesn't convey the feeling that he really believes it; another person that Bob was put on a pedestal (being a white doctor from Harvard) and the mothers felt betrayed when he circulated his PEAR document (a history of the first year of the program) without first consulting them about the account. They detected undertones of prejudice which greatly disappointed them. Another felt Bob's discourse was pompous and overbearing and that he was interested in the Playroom as a study rather than a meaningful program for the mothers. This impression was partially conveyed when he talked grandly of innovations in education resulting from enrolling mothers in university courses for credit.

Another individual noted that the Harvard group seemed involved in so many things they did not have sufficient time, energy, or patience to give to Playroom 81. Also, they were paternalistic toward the mothers--like Santa Claus, taking them around, showing them off, and having them make speeches. Harvard money was spent in "giving them meals and little excursions by taxi" which could have been used better in improving the program. Another interviewee felt they did not know as much about programming for children as might have been useful. Their energy was focused more on helping the mothers develop then the programming needs of the children.

### 4. Playroom 81 as the Children See it

To provide the flavor of the interviews with children a verbatim record of an interview with a group of children and a summarization of their impressions derived from all the discussions is included below. These interviews were frequently very informal and held during the process of the afternoon activities.

On an ordinary afternoon the interviewer visited the Playroom and found it alive with children. She joined the group of Negro children, ages 8 to 11 years, sitting around a table talking and drawing. The conversation was as follows:

Interviewer: "I'm interested in Playroom 81. May I ask you some questions?"

Children: (two boys of about 11 respond, they giggle, point to each other and exlaim) "He like to talk, he'll answer."

Interviewer: "Why don't both of you talk, one at a time."

Children: (a girl of about 11 and two smaller girls of perhaps 8 and 9) "Can we tell you too?"

Interviewer: "You sure can. I want to know what all of your think and feel. To begin, how did you all hear about Playroom 81?"

Children: (8 year old girl) "My mother works here so I come every day."

(11 year old boys and girls) "Mrs. C. told my mother about it and she said we should come 'cause we could have fun."

Interviewer: "Do you have fun?"

Children: (younger girl) "Ya, we draw and stuff."

(a boy) "Mostly I like the trips."

(other boy) "It's better on game day then we kin play ping pong and use the pool table."

(older girl) "At first I was gonna take cooking but I like arts and crafts better."

Interviewer: "Do most of you come every day after school?"

Children: (older ones) "Ya, if we don't have notin' else to do."

Interviewer: "What did you used to do after school before Playroom 81?"

Children: (all respond) (a boy) "Just hung around the project or played in the street."

(other boy) "I use ta go to boys club sometimes but then I got tired, and that it's too far, but then I may go back 'cause I like the swimmin'."

(older girl) "I use ta do my homework and then look at television or else go outside but sometimes I couldn't find no one else around so I just went back in the house. This is better 'cause there's always someone around."

Interviewer: "Did most of you know each other when you came to Playroom 81 or did you meet a lot of new kids?"

Children: (looking at each other, older boy answers) "Well, I guess we mostly knew each other, but I met some white kids and we had fun."

Interviewer: "Did you know these white children from school?"

Children: (same older boy speaks) "No, mosta the white kids who live around here go to Catholic school. We mostly don't hang around together except we play with the ones who come to Playroom 81 but not outside."

Interviewer: "Do you ever talk about Playroom 81 at school?"

Children: (older girl answers) "Not much, sometimes at recess we talk about it, like if we plan to go at night."

Interviewer: "Do you come more in the afternoon or at night?"

Children: (the older ones) "Well, its better at night 'cause they have the record player and we play games but ya can't take classes at nightime."

Interviewer: "How would any of you define education?"

Children : (older boy) "What do define mean?"

Interviewer: "What do you think education means, is it something you are getting?"

Children: (no response)

Interviewer: "Now come on kids, think. You hear that word often."

Children: (older girl) "Do it mean like you go to school?"

(boy) "Like you hafta get a education to get a job?"

Interviewer: (encouragingly) "Yes, that's the idea, do you consider Playroom 81 a part of your education?"

Children: (older girl) "Sometimes like when you have classes sewing and stuff and they teach ya something."

(boy) "I mostly play at Playroom 81, it ain't like school."

Interviewer: "When you have had fun at Playroom 81 do you feel happier about going to school?"

Children: (boy) "No, I'm not glad to go to school, but I'm glad when I leave school and can come to Playroom 81."

Interviewer: "Do you know what an essay or composition is?"

Children: (older one) "Ya, Mrs. C told us to write one about Negro history."

Interviewer: "Would each of you write an essay for me about Playroom 81?"

Children: (older girl) "Will we get a prize? The one who writes the best on Negro history gets $5."

Interviewer: "I really wasn't planning to give a prize. I would just like to read what all of you write."

Children: (older girl) "Okay." (takes paper and pencil and goes to another room)

(boy) "I gotta go now but tomorrow, I'll write an essay for you." (another boy seconds this)

Later the boys left together, and the younger girls who were drawing wandered into the next room. Some preschoolers came in noisely, pulling each other in a wagon. The older girl returned with her essay, which read as follows:

> "I am 11 years old. I like Playroom 81 because it is a place where we can have fun. We can learn about cooking, sewing and arts and crafts. The mothers at Playroom 81 teach the children. We sometimes play with white children. My mother likes me to go to Playroom 81 rather than be outside after I do my homework. Some of the boys are bad in Playroom 81 and then get sent outside. I sometimes go to Hustler Lounge but only stay until 7. My mother wants me to come home then. We meet a lot of people at Playroom 81."

I made some positive comments about the girl's essay, thanked her for writing it and asked her if she and some of her friends would talk to me again. The girl replied vigorously in the affirmative.

Children's responses and replies to questions where much the same as this quoted sampling. All have a positive feeling about Playroom 81, as evidenced in their eagerness to talk about it and pride in telling about something that belonged to them. The few so did engage in other group activities such as scouts and boys clubs, did feel that the Playroom could not offer them as wide a variety of "sports" as they wished to pursue. Nevertheless, they wanted to continue to come to the Playroom.

Most of the children felt that Playroom 81 provided them with a place to go after school which was close to home and approved by their parents. Here they could meet friends in an informal setting and sometimes got to know new ones. Here too, they saw their own mothers and the mothers of others in positive new roles as instructors and friends.

Many children felt they established better relationships with white children, especially when three children joined them in a setting that was essentially theirs (i.e. the Negro children in the Extension section of the Project).

A somewhat smaller percentage of the children felt that Playroom 81 was contributing to their education in helping them to develop new skills and encouraging them to express themselves in groups. However, most of them saw Playroom 81 as "recreation" and school as "education".

All of the children felt that at Playroom 81 they met many new and different people and were exposed to new experiences as the "trips" with "people from Harvard". The trips were valuable in that they provided recreation, helped them feel more comfortable in unfamiliar settings, and helped them be more aware of a world outside the housing project.

A few of the more astute teens were able to see Playroom 81 as extending or supplementing regular shcool; and offering the children a learning experience in a setting free of the negative feelings often associated with school.

### 5. Playroom 81 as Seen by Community Residents

Summaries of interviews have been organized according to the neighborhood (Mission Hill or Mission Hill Extension) from which the interviewees come rather than by content because of consistent differences in responses of the two groups.

Thirty residents from Mission Hill and twenty from Mission Hill Extension were interviewed at their doors, in their homes, and on the street. They were randomly selected throughout the housing developments with the emphasis on inhabitants with children.

In canvassing, differences in responses could be noted between the predominantly white Mission and the predominantly Negro Mission Hill Extension Developments. Mission Hill residents did not invite the interviewer (a Negro woman) into their homes but talked reluctantly at the at the door. Information was to the point--yes or no--with no additional comments volunteered. In the Extension, she was invited into the homes, conversation was freer, and more information was offered; even coffee was served.

No one in the Mission Hill group had ever visited the Playroom. Of the 11 mothers with children in the Playroom age bracket, seven had heard of the Playroom but were vague about its purpose and four might consider enrolling their children. The main reason for expressed disinterest what that their children were involved in other activities and had enough supervised recreation. Those who were more receptive mentioned they would like to have more freedom to get out of the house; presently their children were not old enough to enroll.

Six teenagers were interviewed and all but one had heard of Playroom 81. A couple were not particularly interested in any details and the others would rather be involved in groups where their friends participated; nearby Norfolk House and the Mission Hill Lounge. Four out of five elderly people interviewed had not heard of Playroom 81.

In contrast to the general disinterest in Playroom 81 in the Mission Hill area, all twelve mothers interviewed in Mission Hill Extension felt it was a much needed recreation program; they did not have access to any other programs. Most of the mothers sent their children unless they were too young. However, the majority of them complained that the program lacked supervision; one mother had stopped sending her younger children because they used to get beaten up. This was the main shortcoming of the program, but recently it has improved. Several liked last summer's program and only one said her children and teens had involvements in activities outside of the housing project.

The four teens interviewed knew of Playroom 81 and although they were too old for the program, they attended the Lounge for teenagers held in the same area. All were enthusiastic and felt it cut down on fights and getting into trouble because they now had someting to do; before there was nothing. Several children were also interviewed and enthusiastic.

From the above summaries, the availability of facilities appears to be a major influencing factor in the interest shown in Playroom 81. Mission Hill, better equipped, turned to resources within their own section of the neighborhood. Mission ~~Hill Extension~~ residents, although dissatisfied with some aspects of the program, were much more aware of the Playroom and interested in its continuance. Racial concerns were suggested by the reserved reception the interviewer received in Mission Hill as compared with Mission Hill Extension but these were closely interwoven with the simple fact of better facilities. Mission Hill residents probably saw no reason why they should leave something they considered more adequate to venture across the street in foreign territory. Discomfort with the unfamiliar characterises Mission

Hill Extension residents as well, for few cross the racial dividing line to enjoy better recreational facilities on the other side.

In summary, the overall impression of persons interviewed was that the Playroom 81 needed to have more structure and training built into the program. Additionally and contributing to the lack of organization were shortcomings on the part of both professional and indigenous staff. The Harvard team was frequently vague about implementation of their expectations of the mothers, were prone to bombard them with too many new ideas with the effect that few could ever be put into practice, did too much for them rather than teaching them to do for themselves and became inbroiled in disagreements among themselves about policy and its implementation. The indigenous staff, on the other hand, frequently appeared poorly motivated in their programming efforts and were casual about carrying out duties or attending when it was inconvenient. Having had no similar work experiences, they were unable to function with the degree of independence required in the structure of the program. It was felt a program director could be beneficial, but there was a fear on the part of the mothers that a more highly trained person would take over.

# CHAPTER VI

## Strengths and Weaknesses of the Playroom 81 Program

In delineating the strengths and weaknesses of the program, the main objectives will be outlined and their achievement discussed.

1. The broadest objective of the Playroom 81 program was to demonstrate the effectiveness of a broader role for guidance counselors in which they are involved in socially significant action. As a liaison person between a school system ineffectively reaching disadvantaged teenagers and the alienated community out of which they came, the guidance counselor could begin bridging the communication gap by setting up educationally relevant programs within the community.

Within the last several years there has been an increasing awareness that the school systems cannot disregard a child's culture (or subculture) if he is to be educated adequately to live in today's society. The influence of his home life and neighborhood values are carried into the classroom with him. Conant (Slums and Suburbs, 1961), surveying urban schools sees the guidance counselor as a key person in the education of school dropouts and potential delinquents. "Guidance officers, especially in the large cities, ought to be given the responsibility for following the post-high school careers of youth from the time they leave school until they are 21 years of age. This expansion of the school's functions will cost money and will mean additional staff--at least a doubling of the guidance staff in most of the large cities. But the expense is necessary, for vocational and educational guidance must be a continuing process to assure a smooth transition from school to the world of work." (P. 41)

The importance of expanding the guidance counselor's role toward greater community involvement is being recognized by educators but this goal was not realized with the Playroom 81 project. Dr. Belenky approached the Boston School committee in the fall of 1965 offering to serve as a liaison between the Playroom program and the schools attended by the Playroom children. His offer was refused and negotiations were never reopened. Reasons for the refusal are not clear except that the committee did not feel they were interested at that time.

2. The second objective was to have the Playroom serve as a community based laboratory site for training in urban teaching, guidance, and community work programs and for the generation of hypotheses relevant to the development of community urban educational programs.

A number of different training programs was conducted at the Playroom, although not under the auspicious of Harvard. Dr. Belenky's university students fulfilled part of their course requirements at the Playroom by testing children or interviewing community residents. Wheelock students helped the mothers' program and supervised the morning play hour for the pre-school children as part of a teaching practicum experience. The supervisor of the Wheelock students found that those students who were more advanced in their training and had more self-confidence in their ability to deal with preschool children benefited more from the Playroom experience than newer and less experienced students. This related primarily to the degree of structure and expertise a student could bring to the morning program. Those who preferred to be creative in an unstructured situation were more satisfied with their experience than those who would like specific duties outlined.

Training was also given the indigenous non-professional staff in the psychology classes conducted during the year. Those who attended were unanimous in feeling the classes were beneficial in helping them manage children better.

It might be said that the beginnings of training in urban teaching, guidance, and community work have been touched upon. Given better program organization and supervision, the Playroom setting could become a significant resource in achieving the above goals. Presently, its future as a training site is uncertain since it is not clear whether other universities will replace Harvard's affiliation with the program.

3. A third objective was to establish a corps of trained local people able to help the school in such semi-professional

roles as librarian, proctor, teacher aid, and secretarial aid with the prospect of having them become fully credentialed teachers.

The beginnings of this objective can be seen in educational opportunities of which some of the mothers have taken advantage and in which they plan to participate. For example, the eight week teacher aid course at Garland College. Several others are making plans to participate in university extension courses pertaining to child management and development in the fall. Several discussions have been and will be held with the local school principal regarding the possibility of mothers serving as school aids in the classroom. It is evident that their interest had been stimulated and opportunities for developing more marketable skills which appeared beyond the realm of possibility prior to coming to the program are now seen to be within their grasp. Perhaps the most crucial change is that the hope that things could be better is now being translated into action through their own initiative and hopefully will continue in their own lives regardless of the uncertainity of the future course of Playroom 81.

4. The fourth objective was to raise aspiration levels of community people, specifically teenagers, by exposing them to role models, occupational possibilities, and making school more immediate and important through discussions. Part of the instrumentality in effecting these objectives would be training teenagers to develop a recreational program for young

children as well as acquaint them with occupational training resources and effective interview and on-the-job behavior.

Of approximately 12 teenagers involved with Playroom 81, two have maintained some sustained contact. One who had dropped out of school has returned to a private school where she will finish her high school education; another is continuing his schooling through university courses geared to obtaining a high school equivalency diploma. They both feel the Playroom experience has been helpful in motivating them to pursue these goals, but it is not possible to isolate the effects of this experience from others in their lives. All other teenagers discontinued their involvement with the program with a time period of several months to a year after it was initiated. Difficulties in maintaining the program sprang from at least three obvious sources:

a. Teenagers with the most acute problems in social adjustment were requested from the Neighborhood Youth Service Corps. Coincident with this group compostion was a lack of structure and supervision in the teenage program. Professional staff were involved in time consuming disagreements about planning and implementing the program;and the youngsters,left too much on their own, quickly reverted to old patterns of dealing with responsibility and grew to resent any demands placed upon them.

b. The emerging pre- and after-school program initiated by the mothers came into conflict with the recreation program the teenagers were running for children: roles for child care were not clearly defined, animosity developed between the two groups and each became sensitive to the other's shortcomings, there was inadequate supervision for mothers and teenagers, and the mothers soon began to draw more of the professional attention.

c. Disagreements among Harvard team members took time and energy which was needed for the development of the program and the supervision necessary for the indigenous staff.

Studies where success has been noted with delinquent teenagers suggest a program of intensive care is necessary where structure and support are provided both on a continuing and crisis basis. Massimo and Shore (1965) report their success was characterized by a multi-dimensional approach--"intensive psychotherapy for exploring personality conflicts, remedial education as a means of supporting the learning sector of ego functioning, and employment, which was not only therapeutic in itself but provided a focus in reality for the psychotherapy and re-educative endeavors." (p. 541) This approach, which has been found successful, would suggest that teenagers who have not learned skills which will help them adapt successfully in this culture need a structured, intensive program where they can begin to learn more socially constructive ways of managing their lives. Left too much on their own, they revert to the familiar ways of dealing with life which initially brought them into social conflict. Opportunity in and of itself is not enough. Specific guidelines are imperative.

5. The fifth objective was to have program members become self-sufficient in running their own program, train them in the management and care of children.

As the Playroom 81 program has emerged, the children's program has been the focal point of activity and interest. Increasingly the indigenous staff has become more self-sufficient in running the program. Increased structure has been introduced gradually and the program that exists today for the children is far superior to the one which existed even one year ago. A definite plan for activities is mapped out each day and is usually executed effectively. The mothers still tend to be more casual than desirable about programming but they are continuously instituting changes which make for a smoother and more efficient operation. In addition, group functioning as a whole is much improved over the previous year. The staff carry through on tasks better, are more articulate and specific in confronting problems, have more insight into children and manage them more effectively, are more aware of occupational and program resources open to them and several have and will take advantage of available training opportunities. It is probable that several will seek other positions if the Playroom is unable to continue because of inadequate funding.

6. To facilitate a service relationship between the Playroom and the local schools where the Playroom might provide

study hall facilities, observation of children experiencing classroom difficulties, and additional classes for children.

To date, teachers from surrounding schools where Playroom 81 children attend have contacted the Playroom 81 staff to ask questions about their observations on problem children attending the Playroom. Several meetings have been held between Playroom staff and the principal of the local school to discuss the possibility of mothers serving as teachers aids. No definite plans have emerged but talks are scheduled to continue in the fall. It appears that the beginnings of a service relationship between the Playroom and the school is in process. However, extension of services provided at the Playroom, study hall facilities and additional classes, would necessitate expansion of the present program to include more staff, hours, and activities. Since greater organizational efficiency is needed in the present program, it would seem prudent to accomplish this before further responsibilities in longer range expansion goals are assumed.

7. The seventh objective was to have the Playroom serve as a center for work and discussion in which new ideas for community initiative and organization might germinate.

Again, this is a long range objective which, hopefully, will develop as the program continues. During the year the mothers engaged in several community activities: an afternoon tea for a congressman, a chicken dinner to provide needed financial assistance for a community resident, two afternoon teas inviting interested persons to visit the Playroom. The former two were quite well attended, but showing was poor at the last two; in fact, out of 80 persons invited only two or three showed up. Although not too successful, the members of the Playroom have attempted to involve the community in the activities and through the fall discussions with the local school principal may move further into the community to serve in the school as teacher aids.

Most of the initiative for community involvement is presently one way: Playroom mothers are making efforts to move toward the community, but traditionally lethargic, the general community is not reciprocating with any apparent active interest in the program. Nevertheless, the Playroom group is one of the most active in the neighborhood and has been identified as a source of community activity. With the present resources available to the community, the Playroom would be the logical place where community based ideas might germinate.

In summary, the Playroom 81 program has achieved its goals of increasing achievement expectations of group members, and helping them become more self-reliant in order to independently operate the Playroom program. It must be said that these goals have not been fully achieved, particularly with regard to independent program operation. There has been slow but consistent improvement, but considerable refinement of program skills is necessary before Playroom 81 could successfully compete with an efficient, smoothly run children's program.

The Playroom 81 setting has served as a site for modest ventures in community-based teacher and guidance training, and the establishment of a group of locally trained people to work with the school systems. However, the development and course of these activities is uncertain. With Harvard's termination of the two-year contract to subsidize development of the program, it is unclear whether or in what capacity Playroom 81 will maintain a university affiliation, and consequently continue to serve as a student training site. Regarding the use of trained local people in the school system, it is also uncertain to what extent this objective will be realized; whether talks with the school system about the use of mothers as teacher aids will materialize beyond the discussion stage.

The broadest objective, to alter the role of the guidance counselor to involve him in socially significant community action, does not appear to have been accomplished. After Dr. Belenky's initial overtures to the Boston School Committee where he offered to serve as a liaison between Playroom 81 and the schools attended by these children, contact was not resumed. Therefore, his role in the program was not directly related to the public schools, but was one of a psychologist developing a community-based educational program.

The general strengths and weaknesses of the program can be assessed in terms of the extent to which its objectives have been met. Most of them are in the beginning stages and more time is necessary to evaluate whether these beginnings will develop or diminish. This task lies in the future.

# CHAPTER VII

## Overall Assessment of the Playroom 81 Program

Assessment of program success is important, but an equally significant question must be posed regarding the development of such indigenous ventures; what is the most economical way, in terms of time and energy, to develop a self-sufficient, ongoing, community program. Specifically in relation to the Playroom 81 program, if one is presented with the goal of setting up a child care program in a disadvantaged neighborhood which is run either by teenage high school dropouts or neighborhood mothers without prior experience, what operational guidelines can be delineated for the economical development of an indigenous, well-functioning program.

Pearl and Riessman (1965) see trained non-professionals as a major potential resource in bringing social services to people within their own community. While they focus upon the non-professionals working out of established service agencies in collaboration iwith professionals, rather than running their own self-sustaining programs, they outline several pertinent points fore preparing the non-professional for community service. Attention is given to issues of training people from a lower socioeconomic group with life styles differing from the middle class professional who must be responsible initially for their training, to some of the difficulties indigenous staff encounter in moving into new and unfamiliar roles and training approaches that can effectively meet the learning needs of the indigenous non-professional.

A. Training

One of the most important training foci is the provision of continuous on-the-job training and early initiation to work.

For the most part, Pearl and Riesman stress learning within structured, well-planned guidelines. Initially Playroom 81 differed from this approach in that the Harvard team (Drs. Belenky and Clark) had adopted a highly democratic training approach where options were presented but all decisions were left to the mothers. They thought that if people were given the opportunity to make and implement choices they would spontaneously assume initiative previously lacking and move toward the preferred decision. Over time it became apparent that the mothers did not always have the educational or social exposure to understand and think through alternative and ramifications of problems at hand, or to make decisions and initiate action. Both content and process are new and they had not the benefit of experience or training in educational and recreational programming for children.

In establishing a training program lack of experience and initiative on the part of the mothers was complicated by the Harvard team's uncertainty about their own goals for Playroom 81. Was it merely a playroom, a community venture in integration, a university or indigenous training site for both students and community residents? When goals could not be clearly specified, appropriate and consistent action for accomplishing the goals could not be planned. Consequently, the mothers were presented with many ideas and possibilities for program activities or directions and expected to cull out of the alternatives what they most wanted. Most of the ideas sounded exciting to them, but their variety frequently had the effect of confusing the mothers rather than helping them define objectives.

Initially, the mothers' group stated they felt a pre-school program was the most needed service in the community. A year latter this was again restated and more focus brought into the program training. However, in the interum, much training time was lost because of the lack of defined clarity about the goals for the project.

Further, within the democratic framework they had initiated, Drs. Belenky and Clark found themselves in a bind. Responsible to Harvard for the development of an educational program, they had given the power of decision making over to the mothers who were not prepared to assume such responsibility. They believed the community possessed the resources for its own betterment and the most meaningful changes would eventuate if Negroes helped Negroes, rather than whites doing it for them. To avoid the latter situation, where the white professional took over, they adopted an opposite position where the mothers should do everything for themselves. This arrangement posed several difficulties; Drs. Belenky and Clarks, responsible for the success of the program, had technically left themselves without authority in its implementation and when the mothers were indecisive and disorganized tended to make decisions for them. This role duality further created confusion so that neither professional nor non-professional staff were clear about lines or role demarcation and extent of their authority.

The uncertainty of both program objectives and implementation on the part of the Harvard staff, did not allow them to clearly outline training procedures for the indigenous staff. Initially, formal training consisted primarily of field trips to educational institutions, speaking engagements to university students where the indigenous staff described their program and recreational trips for the children. There were group discussions around definition of the long range and short term goals and more efficient executing of day-to-day details. However, other than an arts and crafts class no structured training in child development, needs and interests of children at different ages, child management, programming and activities skills, or development of a relationship with members of the professional community was initiated.

The overall approach during the first year of program operation followed more closely along lines of cultural enrichment than specific program training. More training was introduced the second year in terms of classes in child psychology and a wider variety of arts and crafts skills suitable for the children. At the same time,the mothers themselves introduced more structure with innovations such as posting weekly activity schedules, restructuring children groupings along lines of interest as well as age, and a wider variety of available activities. The professional staff stressed to the indigenous staff the importance of doing, but in retrospect the question was raised by one of the professional staff as to whether they knew how to teach people how to do things without taking over themselves.

Among all persons interviewed, there was unaminous agreement that a more specific training should have been introduced with the beginning of the program. Overall, it was felt training should have been related more directly to the development of skills needed in running a children's recreational-educational program: workshops, programming, child interest and needs at different ages, resource sources, and administrative skills.

Although knowledge of the most effective ways of training low-income non-professional is in its infancy, there are indications that a practical, concrete, down-to-earth style is most successful. (Pearl and Riessman, 1965) The relationship between an idea and practical experience must constantly be pointed out with frequent checking to make sure ideas are understood. The effects of a more concrete, illustrative type of teaching versus one that is more conceptual and oriented toward verbal discussion could be seen in the indigenous staff response to the two psychology courses offered: one focused around observation and discussion of the children's behavior in various task situations while the other encouraged reading and discussion of technical psychological materials which ordinarily would be offered in a graduate level college course. Many of the mothers felt the observational psychology course in child behavior was their most helpful training experience. At the same time, most of them also noted that the more conceptual course was difficult for them to understand and they did not see that it had relevance for the Playroom program. The rationalization offered for its presentation was that the mothers' confidence in their ability to master formal educational material and consequently their attitude toward learning would be enhanced when they found they could understand what the author was trying to say even though they did not know the meaning of all of the words. However, they displayed resistance rather than interest in learning through this method and some of their remarks suggested that this approach undercut their self-confidence rather than enhanced it.

Further, in the training of indigenous non-professionals an intimate knowledge of the life styles and attitudes of low income groups is essential. The style of the middle class professional, with different educational and cultural exposure is oriented toward a more conceptual, abstract approach with high emphasis on verbalization. The lower income group, on the other hand, are more down-to-earth, oriented toward action rather than talk and need symbols tied to direct experiences in order for them to be meaningful. The basic difference must be understood by the middle class trainer if he is to be effective.

In general, the training that was given at Playroom 81 was more oriented toward an activity than a lecture approach but it was haphazard without clarified objectives. The Harvard team gave the mothers much encouragement to be more efficient in terms of telling the mothers what they should do and how the should become more organized. Possibly one of the reasons organization evolved so slowly was that the professional staff were not themselves well organized either in terms of the program goals or the methods of implementation. Consequently, they were unable to structure a highly relevant training program for the indigenous staff or serve as the best models of organization themselves.

B. Team Approach

Another important point in the training of indigenous personnel is the development of an intensive team approach aimed at building strong group solidarity among the non-professional workers. Group morale among the mothers of Playroom 81 was varied over the two years and gradually became stronger as they have been able to verbalize their dissatisfactions and demand better performance within their own ranks. However, the intense conflict among the professional staff during the first year, notably J. Reed and

Dr. Belenky around program implementation, prohibited any solid team approach which could serve to weld the mothers together as a purposeful group. In fact, so much professional staff energy was consumed with their own disagreements that the mothers, the program planning and the supervision were neglected. In the development of community programs, this experience points to the imperative of having people work together who share similar goals and are able to implement them cooperatively. Initially the professionals must serve as models after which the trainee can pattern his working habits. If they are frequently unavailable or disorganized themselves, it becomes much harder for the indigenous group to successfully master the skills they need to run an efficient program. The mutual support and recriprocal learning arising out of a strong team approach where everyone is united around a common goal is difficult, if not impossible to attain, if there is not a unified team approach among the professional training staff.

## C. Selection of Non-professionals

In an indigenous community program such as Playroom 81, where one of the central goals is a self-reliant and financially independent operation, the non-professional staff constitute the core group upon which its success depends. Careful selection of personnel is important if a well functioning organization is to emerge: persons who are interested in and able to contribute service to their community, who are willing to learn and motivated to improve themselves and their particular life circumstances. People who have been very ill should not be employed but people who have had certain kinds of crisis problems or smaller emotional difficulties might well profit from being employed (Pearl and Riessman, 1965).

When the teenage rehabilitation program was in its conceptual stages, plans were made to take adolescents from the Neighborhood Youth Service Corps who had the most serious problems. The rationale behind this decision saw these youngsters as the most disadvantaged and the most in need of an opportunity to reassert themselves in society in a more productive way than they had been previously possible. However, the fact that they had the most serious problems implies that they were teenagers who had the most difficulty finding an adequate structure in their environments within which they could function productively, a low frustration tolerance, limited self-initiative and ability to complete tasks, generally poor inter-personal relationships and conflicts with authority. These characteristics would necessitate a closely supervised program and clearly structured framework within which they could perform. Having few internal controls they could depend upon for behavioral productivity, they would be likely to revert back to their previous unsatisfactory patterns of dealing with their world when left on their own. This was, in fact, the sequence of their involvement at Playroom 81. Initially they involved themselves in activities with the children. Supervised discussions were held but there was little programming for activities with a resultant sense of futility as to how relevant and effective their efforts were.

When the mothers became more active and efforts were made to have the teenagers work with them animosities and resistances to active program involvement increased. At the same time, the professional staff were involved in inter-team disagreements which took time that had been originally planned for supervision of the teenagers. The mothers, more stable than the adolescents, gradually assumed the running of the program and the teenagers dropped out. Out of a dozen youth, two remained involved with the program. One for one year until she went back to school and the other for the two year period while he followed a course at Northeastern which could bring him a high school diploma.

Within the mothers group resentments also arose around members who were unwilling to assume their share of the responsibility for programming. Although non-professional staff selection tightened up in the second year of operation, during the first year anyone who came could join the Playroom 81 staff. Most of the members were interested in establishing a preschool program but problems were created by some persons who had rather serious difficulty in their interpersonal relationships and who finally left of their own accord or were asked to leave by the other members.

As outlined personnel policy where only people capable of developing the required skills would be hired could have avoided some of the problems and difficulties that arose. People unsuited for the program frequently eliminate themselves eventually, but prior planning about the characteristics of successful non-professionals could economize program development both in terms of time and effort expended. This does not imply that individuals with personal problems or minor life crisis situations should not be included, but the program will have the potential of being more effective if its members are able to preserve areas of functioning relevant to program activities that are not dominated by personal difficulties.

## D. Delegation and Use of Authority

The delineation and delegation of authority is of central importance in any well functioning program or organization. Ambivalence regarding the use of authority permeates the development of the Playroom 81 program and much has been referred to and discussed in the preceeding pages. Reiff and Riessman note that one of the leading complaints professionals make about non-professionals is that they are reluctant to assume authority. On the other hand, they make reference to the ambivalence of many middle class people who find it difficult to be authoritative without being authoritarian and cannot easily combine authority with warmth. The Harvard team found themselves in this dilemma of being uncertain as to when it was appropriate to assert their authority and how it could be done most effectively.

They found it difficult to make demands without feeling they were being punitive and tended to try to make suggestions, and present alternatives to the mothers. The indigenous staff, more accustomed to the position of being recipients of authority, rather than assuming it, frequently did not follow through on suggestions. At these points the professional staff tended to become authoritarian or withdraw in frustration and discouragement wondering exactly what could be expected of the mothers. In their own uncertainty they could not provide consistent program guidelines through which the mothers could orient themselves to a power structure and learn from it. Rather, vascillation fron one position to another left the indigenous staff to interact within a power structure that could appear arbitrary and somewhat similar to the social bureaucracy lower socioeconomic groups have grown the suspect and resent. If an indigenous non-professional can feel that the professional authority is genuinely concerned with them, they can become more receptive to people in authority and with it the assumption of authority (Reiff and Riessman, 1965). However, they lack practice in the assumption of authority and it is important to provide practice in a permissive setting (as role playing) and to make sure they have detailed knowledge about exactly what is expected of them.

From the vantage point of the researcher observing the numerous factors that contributed to the development of Playroom 81, one of the most crucial facts influencing the lack of structure and clarity that permeated the program, more noticably in the earliest months of operation, was the absence of any specific contractual agreement between the Harvard team and the indigenous staff. First, the Harvard team had a general idea of an educational rehabilitative program they wanted to develop with drop out teenagers by putting them in a more responsible care giving role, but no definition of how this was to be accomplished. They moved into the community, exploring through interviews its felt needs and asking people what kind of service program they most preferred. When the community objectives of a pre-school program did not coincide with the Harvard team objectives, they tried to incorporate both into one program without spelling out first in detail their modus operandi. Resentments quickly developed between the teenagers and the mothers who were both trying to establish a children's program: initially the teenagers were paid and the mothers were not, attendance was sporadic, no specific program guidelines were laid down for either group, the professionals became engrossed in their own disagreements and adequate supervision was not provided. As difficulties arose, various arrangements were tried: having the teenagers help the mothers supervise the children, giving them their own groups of children separate from those of the mothers, or pep talks. None were particularly successful and within six months, most of the teenagers had dropped out of the program, leaving it for the mothers to run.

Secondly, and possibly an out-growth of the white professional's sensitivity to robbing the disadvantaged person of the satisfaction of succeeding through his own efforts, offering the yet untrained indigenous staff the full power of decision making on all matters pertaining to a program for which they did not in fact have to assume responsibility created confusion. They were responsible to no one for its success, financial subsidizing did not lie in their hands, and continuing funds were assured regardless of their productivity. In the professional staff's efforts to provide the latitude in opportunities for development, there were not contractual levels by which any demands could be made upon the indigenous group. They were paid regardless of the regularity of their attendance, their productivity while there, and initially anyone who was interested could become a staff member. More accustomed to a passive life style where they waited for things to happen the mothers learned slowly to mobilize themselves as a functioning group. In the process great frustration was created among the mothers themselves because they were not satisfied with the program and would lapse into cyclic periods of apathy followed by renewed efforts; in the professional staff because satisfactory gains were not being made in spite of their encouragements and they had technically given up the authority to make any concrete demands upon the mothers; and in visiting or consulting professionals who became discouraged by the disorganization and tended to disinvolve themselves from their initial commitment to assisting with the development of the program.

The lack of clearly specified goals and contractual commitments between parties had the effect of undermining the morale of most of the people, professional and non-professional, involved in the Playroom 81 program. One unfortunate effect eventuated from the dilemmas and uncertainties that confronted the project members around issues of role definition, expectations, and points of leverage for helping people mobilize themselves more productively. Harvard, having already accumulated a reputation for being impractical and somewhat paternalistic, was looked upon by the community with skepticism from the beginning. People waited to see what would happen and when they observed continued disorganization began to feel their negative impressions wer confirmed. Initially, the mothers were enthusiastic about the Harvard group because the program allowed them opportunities for self-initiative and development that they might not have had otherwise. However, when the professional staff put themselves in the position of having to gain the mothers' permission for any action they might take which directly related to the program and did not follow through on their agreement, the mothers became disallusioned and felt betrayed. The particular instance where this was most noticeable was in Dr. Belenky's distribution of his account of the history of the program without first consulting the mothers. It contained several passages which they felt were offensive. In the light of the agreements that had been made, their disallusionments were justified.

However, the question must be raised as to whether this is the best kind of arrangement for a professional group to take with a non-professional indigenous group still in the process of being trained to run a program. If a professional group is willing to supply financial support and consultation to help neighborhood people acquire skills that will benefit both themselves and their communities, should they not maintain certain decision-making perogatives until the indigenous group is adequately trained to constructively assume this responsibility. Given permission to veto professional staff's actions, the responsibility of the professional staff toward the non-professionals is emphasized, without stressing the importance of reciprocal responsibility.

In the development of an indigenous program, it is as crucial to train the non-professional in a way in which they will feel comfortable with the professional community and gain an awareness that both groups must share responsibility equally to best accomplish their goals of self-development and reliance.

The constant stream of visitors and students observing the Playroom 81 program, most frequently at the request of the professional staff, further contributed to the "we-them" feeling that can exist within disadvantaged ethnic groups when they come in contact with the professional and academic world. While the mothers gave their permission, they felt at times as if they were being observed in an analytical experimental way, like "guinea pigs". Living the sheltered life of a poverty community, the white professional academic world was "out there". During interviews mothers remarked that their visits to universities to attend meetings and address students began to lessen the feeling of separate worlds. However, with the numerous people observing the program, the very slow growth in organization noted by people tangentially related to the Playroom, the mothers' own awareness that more effective functioning was possible and their yet uncertain confidence in themselves all contributed to a sensitivity about the program effectiveness where they felt personal responsibility for its failure (when it existed). This served to increase, not abate their feeling of alienation from the professional community.

Again, contributing to the sense of alienation was the previously mentioned lack of role definition expectation. The professional staff were unclear themselves about what performance could reasonably be expected from the indigenous staff. Consequently, they were uncertain about how much and what specific pressures ought to be exerted. The growth of some organization in the program was a slow, labored process and frequently the professional staff would view minor gains as major ones. The mothers had never participated in an efficient, effective program themselves and had no criteria against which they could measure their progress. Consequently, when they became more aware that the consensus of opinion among tangentially involved professional staff outside the Playroom, they felt let down and betrayed and previous suspicions of the professional community were renewed.

Hopefully, much of this could have been avoided if role expectations could have been clearly and concretely outlined with frequent feedback about organizational progress in the light of a specific criteron of a well functioning children's recreation program.

A more focused training effort would help alleviate a number of the sources of confusion that has hampered the development of the program; activity would be more goal oriented, the indigenous staff would be provided structure within which they could gradually begin making decisions and accept greater responsibility. If tasks could be clearly outlined and mastered, incremented successes would contribute to cohesive group morale and the development of a sense of functioning adequacy which many experiences prior to the Playroom did not offer them.

# CHAPTER VIII

## Summary

Playroom 81 was a recreational program available to children in the Mission Hill Extension Housing Development, Roxbury, Massachusetts. It was operated by ten mothers indigenous to the project who were subsidized by the Commonwealth Service Corps.

The Playroom 81 project was supported by funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity which were allotted to the Shadow Faculty at the Research and Development Center, Harvard University, and in turn to PEAR (Psycho-Educational Action Research) over a two-year period from September 1965 to June 1967 for the purpose of developing "innovative and utopian laboratory schools" which would challenge traditional methods of education.

The following objectives were conceptualized for Playroom 81:

1) To demonstrate the effectiveness of a broader role for guidance counselors in which they were involved in socially significant action. As a liaison person between a school system which was ineffectively reaching disadvantaged teenagers and the alienated community out of which they came,the guidance counselor could begin bridging the communication gap by setting up educationally relevant programs within the community.

2) To serve as a community based laboratory site for training in urban teaching, guidance, and community work programs and for the generation of hypotheses relevant to the development of community urban educational programs.

3) To establish a corps of trained local people able to help the school in such semi-professional roles as librarian, proctor, teacher aid, and secretarial aid with the prospect of having them become fully credentialed teachers.

4) To raise the aspiration level of community people, specifically teenagers, by exposing them to role models, occupational posibilities, and making school more immediate and important through discussions. Part of the instrumentality in effecting these objectives would be training teenagers to develop a recreational program for young children as well as acquaint them with occupational training resources and effective interview and on-the-job behavior.

5) To have program members become self-sufficient in running their own program, train them in the management and care of children.

6) To facilitate a service relationship between the Playroom and the local schools where the Playroom might provide study hall facilities, observation of children experiencing classroom difficulties, and additional classes for children.

7) To have the Playroom serve as a center for work and discussion in which new ideas for community initiative and organization might germinate.

To determine the extent to which these objectives were realized a research methodology involving observation and interviews was developed. Researchers observed and noted morning and afternoon programs several times a week from August 1966 through May 1967. Impressions of the program were also secured through interviewing the indigenous and professional staff and other individuals engaged in the project in a less intense but meaningful way.

Initially the Harvard Team had planned to have teenagers who were dropouts from high school run a recreational program for children from a disadvantaged community under the supervision of a psychologist. However, when the community was consulted a program evolved where mothers ran activities for pre-school age children during the morning and afternoon activities for school age children. The Harvard team tried to combine both programs but within six months all but one of the dozen teenagers originally involved had dropped out and the mothers took over the program. This change was most obviously related to the initial lack of structure and supervision in the program. The Harvard team went into the project with a highly democratic approach to group functioning and productivity, but in addition became engrossed in inter-team disagreements which consumed more energy than the supervision and planning.

Although the Playroom 81 program tended to become more structured over time, organization was still casual after two years of operation. The overall impression of persons interviewed was that Playroom 81 needed to have more structure and training built into the program. Additionally, and contributing to the lack of organization were shortcomings on the part of both professional and indigenous staff. The Harvard team were frequently vague about implementation of the expectations of the mothers, were prone to bombard them with too many new ideas with the effect that few could ever be put into practice, did too much for them rather than teaching them to do for themselves and became embroiled in disagreements among themselves about policy and its implementation. The indigenous staff, on the other hand, frequently appeared poorly motivated in their programming efforts and were casual about carrying out duties or attending when it was inconvenient. Having had no similar work experiences, they were unable to function with the degree of independence required in the structure of the program. It was felt a program director could be beneficial, but there was a fear on the part of the mothers that a more highly trained person could take over.

In summary, the Playroom 81 program has achieved its goals of increasing achievement expectations of group members, and of helping them to become self-reliant in order to independently operate the Playroom program. It must be said that these goals have not been fully achieved, particularly with regard to independent program operation. There had been slow consistent improvement, but considerable refinement of program skills is necessary before Playroom 81 could successfully compete with an efficient, smoothly run children's program.

The Playroom 81 setting has served as a site for modest ventures in community based teachers and guidance training, and the establishment of a group of locally trained people to work with the school systems. However, the development and course of these activities is uncertain. With regard to the use of trained local people in the school system, it is also uncertain to what extent this objective will be realized: whether talks with the school system about the use of mothers as teacher aids will materialize beyond the discussion stage.

The broadest objective, to alter the role of the guidance counselor to involve him in socially significant community action, does not appear to have been accomplished. Overall, most of the objectives were in the beginning stages of realization at the time Harvard terminated financial support and the degree to which they may be implemented can be determined only in the future.

Aspects of the organizational structure of Playroom 81 and the lack of clarity in role definitions and expectations which contributed to the confusion that hampered much of the program development are discussed in Chapter VII.

# APPENDIX A

# GRANT REQUEST FOR CONTINUING DEMONSTRATION COMMUNITY PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AND MOTHERS

## "PLAYROOM 81"

Mission Hill Extension Housing Project
Parker Street, Boston Massachusetts

MARCH 1967
FIRST DRAFT

# REQUEST FOR CONTINUED FUNDING OF PLAYROOM 81

## History

Playroom 81 began in October, 1965, when a group of mothers from the Mission Hill community got together and decided that something had to be done to provide recreation and other services for the children of the immediate area. Mission Hill is a low income housing development in the Roxbury section of Boston. Because of the placement policies of the Boston Housing Authority the 1,023 families in the Mission Hill Project are primarily white while the 588 families in the Mission Hill extension across the street are primarily Negro. Fifty percent of the 8000 people in the Mission Hill neighborhood, 3/4 of whom live in the housing developments, have incomes of $3000 or less. There are 2000 children under 18 in the area.

The mothers were concerned because there were no recreation facilities in the extension project. They didn't want the younger children to have to go the distances or cross the busy streets necessary to reach facilities used by older children.

There was nothing to start with. The mothers began meeting in a basement of the housing project building with the permission and cooperation of the Mission Hill Extension Civic Association. They had been contacted by a group from Harvard who were interested in doing action research in the community.

The group of mothers met almost every morning to find ways of developing a program for the younger children. They were untrained and inexperienced and faced many problems. First it was difficult to keep mothers involved. The group applied to the Commonwealth Service Corps and became full time Commonwealth Service Corpsmen receiving $80 per month to compensate them for their volunteer services. Once the $80 was available the group was able to keep mothers involved and depend on them.

Next it was necessary to fix up the basement so that it would be an attractive place for children to play. The Mission Hill Extension Civic Association had been trying to get the basement fixed up for four years. The Playroom 81 Mothers were finally successful because they volunteered to do the work themselves and Harvard provided the paint. The mothers painted and decorated the basement, drafting anyone who happened to drop-in to help. The Housing Authority tiled the floors, put in a new sink and agreed to pay the gas and light bills (toilets and a stove were already on the premises). The mothers hired a man from the community to do maintenance work in the playroom.

Because the basement at first was just one large space, the mothers had trouble controlling the children who would charge up and down. Gradually, first through appeals to nurseries and schools in the area, and later with funds from Harvard, the mothers got desks, tables and partitions and were able to make the space more functional. In addition toys, books, paper, crayons, tables, chairs, and art supplies were donated by various groups.

After much discussion and many false starts a two-part program evolved. In the mornings the mothers take turns caring for their own pre-school aged children, to free each other to participate in and conduct classes designed to improve both the morning and afternoon programs. In the afternoon they produce and instruct in the recreation program for schoo-age children.

## The Pre-school Playgroup

The mothers' fourteen pre-school children take part in a play group each morning. They finger paint, play games, work puzzles, color, etc. Two Wheelock College students come each morning to work with the children so that the mothers can prepare for the afternoon program and participate in classes. Each morning one mother is assigned responsibility for supervising the Wheelock students and the playgroup. The mothers of Playroom 81 hope eventually to expand the pre-school program to the whole community. They have received requests from 30 to 40 parents who would like their children involved in a pre-school program. At present the limited facilities make expansion impossible but, when additional space can be rented, this is the goal. Mothers have noticed that their children have become less dependent through participation in the playschool.

## Classes

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings the mothers have classes in knitting, sewing, child psychology, and child observation. These courses are open to everyone in the two-project community. Two of the mothers conduct the knitting and sewing classes. The child psychology and child observation courses are being taught by the Harvard researchers and involve outside reading and written work. In addition a course in the techniques of weaving, batiking (an Indian process of designing with wax on various kinds of fabrics) and the art and process of making bead necklaces is being run by a local teacher and professional artist on Tuesday evenings. On Thursday mornings the mothers invite different speakers to meet with them. Friday mornings are reserved for business meetings. The Playroom is closed on Monday mornings.

The mothers have also taken a number of field trips to see what is being done in the field of education so they can improve the program at Playroom 81. Among the places visited were Northeastern University (to talk with the Director of Adult Education), Educational Services, Inc. (to see science programs being used in elementary schools), a Montessori school in the neighborhood, the Eliot-Pearson School, an experimental pre-school program run by Tufts University, and the Children's Museum.

## The Afternoon Recreation Program

Playroom 81's afternoon program gives children (ages 5 to 12) a place where they can have fun and also learn something that will help them get along better. It keeps the children off the streets by giving them someplace to go. This is particularly important in bad weather. The program includes the following activities:

A. One mother has a cooking class for girls and boys. They are taught to plan, prepare, cook and serve simple meals and clean up when they are finished, thus learning simple housekeeping.

B. Another mother has a craft class that makes baskets and is taught other crafts such as gimp work, plaster molds, sand casting and other artistic endeavors.

C. A third mother has a nature and science group. They collect flowers, leaves, seeds and have had live animals on loan from the Children's Museum. They also take nature walks and have visited the Science Museum.

D. Two mothers are conducting a course in basic sewing for a group of girls. They learn fashions, how to follow a pattern, how to alter their own clothes and have made dresses and are now working on pants suits.

E. Another mother conducts classes in woodburning and organizes games such as pool, table Hockey, etc. for the boys while the girls have sewing.

F. A library corner is always available to anyone who wants to use it. Educational films have been borrowed and shown in the library also.

## Effects of Program

The mothers have found the children much easier to control than they were in the beginning. They find the children eager to talk to them and show them things they have made.

If Playroom 81 should have to close, the children of the Mission Hill Housing Projects would return to playing the hallways and would have no place which they could call their own. The Playroom has already done much to lessen the boredom which comes to children when they have "nothing to do" and which often leads to behavior which can be harmful to others as well as themselves. The children of the neighborhood need a place where they can work comfortably and constructively on things which interest them; they need to have adults who can work with them, teach them, help them and appreciate what they do. Playroom 81 has provided this. If Playroom 81 were to close, all this would be gone. If the program closed it would also affect a group of parents who are ready and have proven their ability to serve their community in a way that is needed and respected. The morale of the mothers who have worked in the program is immeasurably higher than it once was. They have learned what they can do and have learned to be respected for it. If the program were to close this, too, would be lost.

## Summer Program

During the summer of 1966 the program continued as during the winter but with the following additions:

1) In collaboration with the local Area Planning Action Council bus trips were taken frequently to places of historic and cultural interest.
2) A day camp program was provided by the Area Planning Action Council in which Playroom 81 children and staff participated.
3) The National Teacher Corps used Playroom 81 as a training site and in so doing provided a certain amount of personnel and monetary assistance.

## What is Unique About Playroom 81

The characteristics of Playroom 81 that set it apart from other urban child care and educational programs are:

A) Local mothers are directing and running the program themselves. Professionals participate as consultants but do not direct the program.
B) The program caters to a wide age range - pre-schoolers as well as adolescents participate.
C) There is an informal family-like atmosphere. A program may spontaneously develop in the afternoon with people of all ages participating.
D) The direction in which the program will move is not cut and dried, nor even exactly predictable. Rather than making a precise plan of what will eventually develop, the mothers wish to leave room for the program to move in its own ways, to take its own shape.

## Long Range Needs

Once the immediate problem of continuing the program as it now exists is solved, the mothers of Playroom 81 plan to develop the activities of the Playroom in the following areas:

1. An enlarged pre-school program (may have to rent space somewhere nearby)
2. Improved after-school program
3. Community education for all adults

  a. Adult Education Classes
  b. Trips and enrichment activities
  c. Vocational training classes
  d. Classes for publicity and social action groups, citizenship

4. Evaluation of program's effect

## Need for Financial Support and Salaries for Mothers

### Immediate Needs

One of the reasons for the success of Playroom 81 up to this point has been our location within easy access of the community. Most of the children and parrents who come to Playroom 81 can come to the basement in a few minutes so that transportation is not a problem.

Harvard which has provided funds for equipment, materials, and consultants out of Office of Education research funds for the past two years will no longer be able to make this contribution after June because of a shift in general policies. The Commonwealth Service Corps will continue to provide $80 per month volunteer stipends but will not have funds to pay for materials.

Most of the mothers who are now with Playroom 81 have been with the program since its beginning in October, 1965. Since January, 1966, they have been receiving a "Full-time Volunteer Stipend" of $80 per month from the Commonwealth Service Corps. The stipends originally were provided on a temporary basis to pay for training pending full and adequate support from other sources. If we are successful in finding general support we plan to ask the Massachusetts-Service Corps to transfer the stipends to pay new trainees coming into the program. We have been dedicated and have worked hard. We have learned a lot, too, both from the experiences in child care and community organization that we have had and through the formal courses in psychology, education and arts and crafts that have been provided us. We are now more skilled, just as enthusiastic, but no better paid.

While working at Playroom 81 we spend most of our time away from our homes, trying to make a place of comfort, pleasure and amusement for all the children of the community.

It is a difficult job, but we are committed to it because we know that it is a valuable service to the community. We are doing useful work of increasingly high quality. People are ordinarily paid for such work; we feel that we ought to be paid also.

As paid workers we will be able to better provide for our own families and will be free to give full time to work in the Playroom and to create even better programs for our community. We want to push ahead with all our might. We are all living in a low income housing project. Most of the mothers are on Aid to Dependent Children or other forms of welfare. We want most of all to have the dignity that comes with well-earned independence.

The mothers have been pleased with the support that has been offered by the Commonwealth Service Corps, and encouraged by the reports that the federal and stategovernments are willing to help them set up a program that can be run by local people. To be denied further assistance would be to destroy the belief that the government really is committed to helping children find a supervised place to play and work, and the mothers to develop their talents and receive the training which will lead to financial independence, and the ability to help others get the same.

# PERSONNEL

## President of the Mothers

The President is the top administrator for the program. She is responsible for active direction and supervision, and liaison function between the playroom and other agencies or institutions in the community and the city. The President will also devote a majority of her time to direct day-to-day supervision of the program staff. She will have the responsibility of choosing and hiring consultants for the program.

## Program Coordinator

Acting as an executive assistant to the President of the Mothers, she is responsible for providing professional consultation on the operation of the program, and training the group in community organization and leadership. She will help to provide the parents with the kinds of information and skills necessary for taking constructive steps to alleviate problems, such as employment, housing, education, health, city services, neighborhood. She works at this with the aim that they should eventually run the program themselves with increasing independence.

## Secretary

## Program Instructors

The mothers - each responsible for a special area of the program.

## Janitor

Man from project - Does heavy cleaning, occasional carpentry and repair and maintenance work.

## Trainees

These would be new mothers in the community every year, and some adolescents in the afternoons.

## Consultants

The Playroom 81 has already become well enough known so that we have had working connections with several colleges and agencies. Garland Junior College, Wheelock College, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Judge Baker Guidance Clinic, Boston University, Northeastern University, as well as the National Teacher Corps. There are many others nearby, which we hope to get to know better, and many have offered to visit and send people as consultants.

# BUDGET

## A. Personnel

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Program Coordinator | $8,320 | |
| 1 President of Mothers | 7,280 | |
| 1 Secretary | 3,120 | |
| 9 Program Instructors @ [illegible],500 | 49,500 | |
| 1 Janitor 1/2 time $190/month | 2,280 | |
| 14 Trainees | | |
| 7 Commonwealth Service Corpsmen @ $80/month Total $6,730 | | 70,500 |
| 7 Neighborhood Youth Corpsmen | | |

## B. Consultants

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bookkeeper | 500 | |
| Training Consultants @ $75/day maximum (Pre-school, co., recreation skills, etc.) | 7,500 | 8,000 |

## C. Travel

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bus at $50/day for 40 days | 2,000 | |
| Out-of-state Travel | 550 | |
| On-the-job Travel for staff $50/menthonth | 3,150 | 3,150 |

## D. Consumable Supplies

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Office Supplies @ $50/month | 600 | |
| Pre-school supplies @ $65/month | 780 | |
| After school supplies @ $400/month | 4,800 | |
| Training material | 500 | |
| Snacks | 800 | |
| | | 7,480 |

## E. Equipment

| | |
|---|---|
| Sewing | 500 |
| Playroom playground | 2,500 |
| Typewriter - electric | 350 |
| Carpentry equipment | 500 |
| Tables - 35 | 180 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Chairs | $ 300 | |
| Easels | 90 | |
| Record Player | 40 | |
| Sink for playroom | 200 | |
| Kitchen equipment | 110 | |
| Shelves | 120 | |
| | | 4,890 |

## Needed Improvements for Basement Rooms

4 Hand basins
2 working sinks

## Other

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Telephone $50/month | 600 | |
| Grand total | | 94,620 |

## SPECIAL DOCUMENTS

Letter from Senator Kennedy

Letters from Children

**EDWARD M. KENNEDY**
**MASSACHUSETTS**

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, D.C.

[illegible]

Dear Mrs. [illegible]:

I do want to thank you and the other families who have so ably carried on Playroom 81 and for permitting me to visit you last week. Yours is a wonder example of what concerned parents can do for the benefit of their children and for the children of others. I have already spoken to Sargent Shriver, the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, about Playroom 81 and the need which it has for funding upon the termination of the Harvard grant this June. I am hopeful that we can be of assistance in this regard, and Gordon Martin has discussed with Doctor [illegible] and with appropriate officials of ABCD the manner in which a proposal should be drafted.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

E M Kennedy

Edward M. Kennedy

## LETTERS FROM CHILDREN

70 Annunciation Road
Roxbury, Mass. 02121
September 4 1966

To Playroom 81

To Playroom 81 I have fan at camp Stowe and we did a lots of things. I played the piano and We went swiming and I went to the slid in the Water I played tenis and I went to the feil and Lynne and ruby tind played ball We went to pick apples I dance with the our grils and we were the go-go girls and barbera was the teacher And we have dance with baby ellis musee and we make mols and I make thing at camp Stow We ran around I and the girls made some grecy stof we drow we tolled jokes and we hade fun and a ellis played music.

Cheryle Lynne Weekes

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70 Annunciation Road
Roxbury Mass.
September 4, 1966

To Playroom 81

To Playroom 81, I had fun down their. At Camp Stown I play, I went swimming and I play tennis, I play baseball and exacises. I dance for the people. I made a pot holders at camp Stown. I went on a boat ride. I went sight seeing. I saw the Bunker Hill Mounument. I saw plenty of things. I had lots of fun during the Summer Program. I'm sorry it had to end.

Yours truly,
Steven Teixeira

---

70 Annunciation Road
Boston Mass. 02120
Sept. 4 1966

To Playroom 81

To Playroom 81 I had fun and this is what I did during the summer. I went to camp stow 4 times. I went with My sisters and Pearl and Reene. I played the piano and went to arts and carf. I went to the boats and rode in it. I play tennis with Pearl and Reene. We went to the Paul Revere house. I went swiming. I went to the Bunker Hill moument I like Mrs. Searcy she is nice.

Yours Turely
Eileen Johnson

---

70 Annunciation Road
Boston Mass. 02120
September 4, 1966

To Playroom 81

To Playroom 81 I had a lot of fun I went on a lot of trips I went on a trip to the Camp Stow. We went on a trip to the state house we went to the MDC POOL We had fun with 81. We went sight seeing. We went to th uss consittution T went tothe bunker hill mounest We play games and had fun we made ling with antie lil and Babsie.

Stephanie Teixeira

---

70 Annunciation Rd.
Boston, Mass. 02120
September 4 1966

To Playroom 81

To Playroom 81 I have fun going on trips to camp Stow I made thing like wallets and doll dress and coats and I play the piano. I play games. The best thing I like is going out in the boats. I went to the feild and pick apples. I went for walk and I had fun down 81 to. I cook and we' had fun show. The teachers are fun to be with. I thing that Mrs. Searcy have help to do a good job.

Love all way

Ruby Johnson

# APPENDIX B

The Boston Globe—Tuesday, February [illegible]

# Ted Makes Antipoverty Tour, Says Playroom Deserves Aid

By F. B. TAYLOR JR.

Staff Reporter

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy asked questions and then sat thoughtfully Monday while eight mothers at the Mission Hill extension housing project explained their problems in running Playroom "81," the day care center they started two years ago.

"Certainly you've captured the whole concept people in Washington are talking about—self-help and initiation," he said.

"We want to find ways we can be of help because you have been so creative."

### LAST STOP

Playroom "81" — in the basement of 81 Prentiss st., Roxbury — was the senator's last stop in a day-long tour of antipoverty projects in Boston and Cambridge.

Kennedy's unannounced visits were made to gather information for Senate hearings, beginning Mar. 13, on the conduct of the war on poverty. He is one of nine members of the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty headed by Sen. Joseph S. Clark (D-Pa.).

Earlier in the day Kennedy dropped in at the Head start pre-school center in the East End House, 105 Spring st., East Cambridge; the Legal Service Center at 432 Broadway, and the Neighborhood Action Center at 424 Broadway, both in South Boston; the National Teacher Corps team at the Sarah Greenwood School in North Dorchester and the Neighborhood Youth Corps work crew of teen-agers at Franklin Park Zoo.

Over a din created by children pounding with wooden blocks, the Massachusetts Democrat explained that Federal funds are not now available for Playroom "81."

"The trouble is that things get so departmentalized and you've got a little of everything. We have to try to he you with these progran We've got to show how this different—and I think it is

This June the 105 childre at Playroom "81" will be their own. Harvard's Sch of Education has put $40, into the project, but its tw year grant is expiring.

Kennedy said after his vis that "a niche must be found in Federal antipoverty programs so that the playroo can get support from Washington.

He also hinted he would push for "year-round fundin for Head Start and other programs.